LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ7 Copyright No.

Shelf H1826U

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Unity's favorite seat. Page 5.

UNITY DODGE

AND HER PATTERNS.

BY

KATE W. HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF "WE THREE," "RACHEL'S SHARE OF THE ROAD,"
"TANGLES AND CORNERS," ETC.

35

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
No. 1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

(1884)

PZ7
.H1826
U

COPYRIGHT, 1883, BY

THE TRUSTEES OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

12-32940

WESTCOTT & THOMSON,
Stereotypers and Electrotypers, Philada.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

LUCRETIA'S "BETTERMOST CAPE" 5

CHAPTER II.

TIMES AND HALF TIMES 32

CHAPTER III.

JOHN'S WIFE 51

CHAPTER IV.

"MY HOUSE" 76

CHAPTER V.

"TOM'S BOY" 105

CHAPTER VI.

SWEPT AWAY 127

CHAPTER VII.

THE PATTERN FROM TOWN 147

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE

A Visit to Flora..... 167

CHAPTER IX.

One Face in the Street-Parade..... 188

CHAPTER X.

Apart from the Sawdust and the Spangles..... 213

CHAPTER XI.

Not According to the Pattern..... 241

CHAPTER XII.

"As when a Standard-Bearer Fainteth"..... 260

CHAPTER XIII.

Letters and a Telegram..... 288

CHAPTER XIV.

"A Damsel came to Hearken named Rhoda"..... 305

CHAPTER XV.

"By a Way that they Knew Not"..... 325

UNITY DODGE.

CHAPTER I.

LUCRETIA'S "BETTERMOST CAPE."

"NOW, I s'pose," said Lucretia to herself as she stood on the back steps and rinsed out her dish-towels, while she furtively watched the small figure perched in solitary state on the wood-pile—"I do s'pose she's just hankering after something or other she hasn't got, as usual. I never saw such a child. I do believe, if there's anything unwholesome, it's to be always in a wonder why things is and isn't, and to be hankering after something or other. When I was her size, I'd have been busy with my doll-house and bits of chaney instead of perched up there like an owl;" and practical Lucretia Gill gave her towels a final snap, hung them on

their appointed line to dry and retreated to her work within-doors.

Certainly it was a very sober little face under the calico sunbonnet on the wood-pile. Unity liked that seat. It was near the road, and commanded a view of that as well as of the farm-yard; and whatever difficulty there was in clambering to it made it more valuable. Perhaps she had an undefined feeling that she could think more clearly by climbing a little above her ordinary surroundings. At least, the wood-pile was a favorite resort for meditation, and she was engaged very much as Lucretia had surmised.

"I wish I had a mother and things like other girls. I wonder what makes it all so —so different?" she mused, gravely surveying her small person, from the dark apron that came closely about her throat, down to the stout little shoes and the bare brown ankles above them; for Lucretia considered that in the summer stockings for children were an expensive absurdity. She would have dispensed with shoes also for common wear, but at that point Unity rebelled.

"Shoes cost a good deal, and money's short; it's always short in this house," remarked Lucretia. "And, seeing your old ones is wore out, I reckon you'd better save your Sunday ones. You can run about without any round home here; it's a sight cooler in summer-time."

But the hot boards and the rough ground hurt the tender feet, and still more did the sight of those small bare members wound the serious brown eyes that scrutinized them so thoughtfully. The child walked two or three times around the yard, then returned to the house and could not be persuaded to leave it again. All that day and the next she mournfully remained a prisoner, and the third morning Lucretia capitulated and brought out the "Sunday shoes."

"There, then! If you must, you must, I s'pose; but I never saw such a child."

Which statement she repeated to the child's father, with the story of her economical endeavor and its failure:

"Other children ain't so fussy. Warren and Reub always went barefoot, I'm sure."

"Did they?" Dr. Dodge slowly recalled

his thoughts from abstruse speculations concerning other worlds to a consideration of the atom of humanity before him, and was struck with a brilliant solution of the mystery: "But, you see, Lucretia, she's a girl."

"Well, so was I a girl," retorted Lucretia, briskly, "but that didn't hinder me from running barefoot all over creation; and it didn't hurt me any, neither. But Unity Dodge ain't nobody else, and never will be."

Which last remark contained a far deeper truth than Lucretia realized. Unity herself dimly comprehended the first clause of it; the latter one was the slowly-acquired knowledge of after-years. Why she was unlike other girls, her life different from theirs, was a question she often pondered; the fact she never doubted.

"And I wish I wasn't," she whispered to herself over the daisies she had gathered that morning. "Other folks don't have just Lucretia: they have mothers. And their houses are all—" She paused there. The house was a problem to her; she could not tell what it lacked. It was bare, plain and unattractive in many ways, yet it was

large and not incommodious. Lucretia certainly kept it clean, and fuel and food had never been wanting. She had seen smaller, humbler homes that possessed the mysterious cheer and brightness which she missed in her own.

A whistle came down the road—an ambitious, self-complacent attempt at an impossible tune—and Tommy Jenkins was attached to the whistle. He paused as he espied the young sentinel on the wood-pile, and lifted his round freckled face to the top of the fence:

"Well, marm, you're up in the world this morning."

The calico sunbonnet gravely nodded.

"Are you making that daisy-chain to wear to the party this afternoon?"

"What party?" The brown eyes grew interested at once.

"Over there—Smith's." Tommy nodded in the direction of a large white house barely visible over the hill. "They're going to have a big time, I tell you. Games in the front yard—lawn they call it 'cause they moved out from town—tiptop supper in the

house and everything gay. Not a big folks's party: it's for children."

"Are you going?" asked Unity, with some awe creeping into her manner at the bare possibility of such a thing.

"Whe—ew!" whistled Tommy, contemptuously. "Do I look like a girl? Any way, there'll be only a few fellers of my size there—them that's so misfortunate as to have sisters, I expect. Why, it's a girls' party. Their niece or cousin, or somebody, is here this summer, and so they've invited all the girls in the neighborhood. They'll be all fixed up—all ribbons and ruffles and curls."

Tommy twisted an imaginary ringlet, smoothed out a fictitious flounce, and, whirling on his heel, marched away. But a few rods down the road he looked back over his shoulder to call mischievously:

"Say! You'd better go."

"If I only could!" exclaimed Unity, drawing a long breath. "If I just only could go to one real party!"

She did not in the least doubt the correctness of Tommy's information. He was one

of those wonderful boys who seem to have an instinctive knowledge of everything that has happened or is about to happen within a radius of ten miles of them, together with an intimate acquaintance with the family history, whereabouts and business of every one who ventures within the circuit. Unity knew nothing of the Smiths or their visitor, but Tommy undoubtedly did. She wished he had stayed a little longer and told her more about it.

Lucretia's voice interrupted her meditation:

"U—ni—ty! Have you gone to sleep up there, Unity Dodge? Do run out to the barn and see if there's any eggs. The boys didn't bring in any this morning, and there ain't enough for my pies."

Obediently the child clambered down and walked toward the old red barn—red originally, though "As long ago as when Dr. Dodge's barn was painted" was now considered an ancient date in village history. Soberly the brown eyes peered into nests and searched the hay, and carefully the sunburned little hands gathered up the treasures

they found, but thoughts wandered far away; and when the commission had been executed, Unity rested her elbows on the table at which Lucretia was busy, settled her chin between her palms and seemed to be intently watching the pie-making. But just as the worthy housewife began to flatter herself that she was giving a useful lesson in domestic high art came the irrelevant question,

"Lucretia, what do folks have to do when they go to parties?"

"Do? Why, nothing, that I know of, but put on their best bib and tucker and go. But what that has to do with making squash-pies is more than I can see."

"I wish I could go," mused the little maiden again and again that morning. She wanted to see how a party would seem; and then other girls went to parties, and she did so want to be like others. "I wonder if I could go? Tommy said 'all the girls in the neighborhood,' and I'm sure I'm one. He said I'd better go, but then he said they'd be all fixed up, and Lucretia said so too. I'm 'fraid I couldn't do it."

There was no one to consult. She felt

instinctively that Lucretia would consider the mere idea preposterous and refuse to entertain it for a moment. The strong, toil-hardened, but not unkindly hands that guided the household machinery had a way of remorselessly crushing many childish fancies. And, as for consulting her father or her older brothers, that was a course which her wildest flights of imagination never suggested to Unity. She would as soon have thought of submitting the matter to the venerable village minister, of whom she stood in mortal awe.

That afternoon occurred one of Lucretia's rare visits to the village proper—the "Centre," where the church, stores and offices clustered, and which, indeed, had lately arrived at the dignity of a town.

"I'm going to buy some things, and it's likely I may run in to see some folks besides and stop for an hour or two," she said, coming down stairs with her bonnet on, and so first announcing her intention. "I don't s'pose anybody'll be asking for me; but if they do, you can tell 'em where I've gone."

Unity watched her out of sight. Here was an opportunity to settle to her own satisfaction, as far as she could do so, the problem that had vexed her. She would dress herself in her very best attire and see how she did look. It was a very limited wardrobe; it allowed no choice in dresses, and very little in anything else. When she had changed her shoes for a somewhat finer pair, donned a light calico dress and wet and brushed her short dark hair until she had obliterated for the time every trace of its natural waviness and made it lie smooth and close against her head, she still looked doubtfully into the little cracked mirror above the old bureau:

"I'm 'fraid I don't look much like a party, after all. Tommy said ringlets and ribbons, and everything; and I haven't any."

Suddenly she espied, through the doorway leading to the room beyond, an open trunk, and in the very top of it something that made the brown eyes sparkle—Lucretia's "bettermost cape." Its owner always called it so. She had made it herself, and kept it for extraordinary occasions; and to Unity's

childish fancy the cotton lace trimmed with rows of narrow bright ribbon was a marvel of elegance and beauty. She took it up admiringly and put it over her own shoulders. Next in the trunk lay a silk apron of ample dimensions, and after a moment's hesitation she tied it around her waist to try the effect.

"It 'most covers me; I'd be pretty nearly all dressed in silk with this on," she said, with a sigh of satisfaction.

Then she walked back and consulted the old mirror once more. Certainly it was a very unusual image that greeted her, and for that reason she concluded it must be the more desirable.

"If I just could wear these," she soliloquized, "I'd be dressed up enough for anything. I wonder if Lucretia would let me, just for once? I—'most—believe—she would."

The last words were whispered very slowly. Like many an older person, she was trying to manufacture a belief which should accord with her inclinations, and she reached the usual result.

"Any way, maybe I'll meet her, and then I can ask her," she added, after an irresolute pause. "I guess I'll meet her."

Poor little Unity! The hardest of all honesty is to be thoroughly honest with one's self, and she was but a new beginner in life's difficult lessons; so, having reached her decision, she took the path in which it was not probable Lucretia would come, and breathlessly hurried along it to avoid any possibility of meeting her.

It was a flushed, heated little face that appeared at the door of the great house on the hill, and a very timid voice that announced to the astonished lady of the mansion:

"Please, I've come to the party."

"You have!"

The hall and the parlors beyond were full of children, and the ripple of mirth excited by the first glimpse of the new comer threatened instantly to become a boisterous outbreak. Mrs. Smith bit her lip to hide her own smile at the oddly-arrayed little figure, and turned to her young guests with a quickly uplifted finger of warning—a gesture the

shyly drooping eyes prevented Unity from observing.

"Will you come in, then, and go up stairs with me to lay off your hat?"

The child obeyed, but as they ascended the stairs the lady fancied the peal of laughter that sounded from the hall was scarcely called forth by the game that had been in progress.

A younger lady ran swiftly up after them, and whispered, as she saw the vexation on Mrs. Smith's face,

"You really cannot blame them. That monstrous apron flopping so far below the short dress in front is too funny for anything. She looks dressed for a masquerade. Where did she come from?"

In the quiet upper room Mrs. Smith lingered in some perplexity.

"I do not think I know you, my dear," she said, kindly. "What is your name?"

"Unity Dodge."

The name conveyed little information to the questioner, but the younger lady at once remarked, "You are Dr. Dodge's little daughter, then?" and added, in a rapid

aside to the hostess, "Lives about a mile down the road, in that farmhouse where everything has the appearance of being allowed to tumble down at pleasure. The doctor is so absorbed in signs and wonders, stars and constellations, that the members of his family have a fine opportunity to shoot out of their proper orbits. This is an illustration, I presume."

Unity caught but little of the explanation, and understood none of it. She heard more clearly Mrs. Smith's answer: "Motherless? Poor little chick!" and already she began to feel saddened, disappointed and thoroughly uncomfortable without at all knowing why.

"Wouldn't it be better to leave your apron up here?" suggested Mrs. Smith, after a moment's pondering. "I think it would."

"Why, it's silk!" exclaimed Unity, in dismay at the proposition.

"So it is, and a very good one too; but none of the little girls are wearing aprons to-day."

Unity pulled it aside and looked doubtfully at the calico dress.

"I'm 'fraid— Will I be fixed up enough?" she asked.

"I think you will. Let me untie it for you."

She longed to dispose of the cape also, but the child's grave face and changing color made her shrink from suggesting it.

"But I'm afraid she won't have a minute's peace down stairs," she whispered to her friend.

"Oh yes, she will; don't be troubled about her. She lives near here, you know, and doubtless is acquainted with many of the children. She will enjoy herself, never fear."

The lady's face brightened:

"I did not think of that. Probably you are right." Then she turned to Unity: "Shall we go down now?"

Half longing to go, yet half afraid to venture, the little girl signified her assent. That large upper room was very pretty, and it was so quiet that she began to wish she might be allowed to remain there and catch only such glimpses of the party as could be obtained from the top of the stairway; but

Mrs. Smith was already leading the way, and she timidly followed, and a moment later found herself in one of the well-filled parlors.

"This is Dr. Dodge's little daughter, who has come to help us enjoy this afternoon, and I hope you will all try to make it pleasant for her. I presume many of you are well acquainted with her already," said Mrs. Smith, deciding that, in the circumstances, a general introduction, quickly got through with, would best answer her purpose, and trusting that the child would drift naturally to those she knew and soon feel at ease.

Called away a moment later, she had no opportunity of watching the success of the experiment, but her friend and assistant for the day laughingly banished her misgivings:

"Odd little creature! Of course she knew some of the children who were invited, or she could have known nothing of the party and would never have thought of coming."

Seeking refuge in the first corner that offered a vacant chair, Unity watched the merry groups around her. How pretty they all were in the light dainty dresses and bright

sashes! No, she certainly did not look like them; and for a few minutes nothing but the comforting consciousness of wearing Lucretia's best cape gave her courage to retain her place and look about her.

Mrs. Smith's friend had been incorrect in her surmise: Unity did not know the other children. Some of the faces she recognized; a few of the names she knew; but that was the extent of her acquaintance with them and of theirs with her. She did not attempt to join in any of the games; no one invited her to do so, indeed. After a time, when the others became fully engrossed in them again and forgot to look at her, she grew more accustomed to the scene and began to enjoy watching it.

Presently the youngest of the party—a little four-year-old who was trotting about in baby unconsciousness, alternately petted or pushed aside by his elders—discovered Unity to be at leisure, and, slipping a beautiful book from a table, brought it to her with the request that she would "tell about the pictures." The brown eyes sparkled, and for the next half hour she was bliss-

fully occupied with the engravings and her tiny companion. The hostess, looking in for a moment and seeing her bright face, was so entirely satisfied that she quite forgot her afterward.

The brightness was of short duration, however. Baby tired of the pictures, and wandered off to try his tiny fingers upon the piano. The rattling and jingling he evoked soon drew the attention of the older ones; he was dispossessed of his seat on the piano-stool, and one after another the girls began to display their proficiency—or lack of it—in music. Most of them were at an age when they were exceedingly well satisfied with their own acquirements, and their laughing ease and glee, their seeming familiarity with the wonderful instrument, awed poor Unity. She watched the fluttering white fingers and the players, then looked down at the little brown hands that lay in her own lap, and grew more and more uncomfortably conscious of her own deficiencies. Then supper was announced, and reluctantly she left her obscure corner and followed the rest. The change threw her

into close proximity with the others again, and in the dining-room she found herself seated beside a boy some three or four years older than herself, who examined her with mischievous eyes.

"Are you Cinderella?" he inquired.

"No," she answered, wonderingly. "Why?"

"Why, I didn't know, you see. It sort of seemed as if you might have started out when your folks were away from home, but I thought, if your fairy-godmother invented the rig, she must have been short of material. So your name isn't Cinderella?"

"No, it's Unity Dodge," she assured him, gravely.

"U—ni—ty Dodge! Well, I've heard of the 'honest dodge' and the 'artful dodge,' but I never heard of a unity dodge before. Did they give you that name because you are all together and the most of your family scattered?"

"I don't know," said Unity, with flushing cheeks. She did not understand him, but she strongly suspected that he was ridiculing her.

"They are bringing around the fruit and

ice-cream now," he remarked, in a moment. "Don't you always take yours with salt in it? Just try it that way, and see if it isn't delicious."

A girl sitting in front of them—a tall, slender girl with sallow face and dark eyes—turned at that instant and surveyed Unity with a cool look of pity and the boy with a still cooler look of contempt.

"You may think that is very funny and very witty, George Shirley, but I don't," she said.—"Little girl, if you choose to come here and sit by me, I'll see that you have your supper in peace."

Unity gladly obeyed, and accepted the seat from which the silken skirt was swept away to make room for her. She was somewhat abashed in this new presence, but it was far preferable to the one she had left. Her young protector had promised that she should have her supper and be allowed to eat it undisturbed, but she evidently intended nothing more; for, beyond seeing that the child was helped to the viands as they were passed, she paid her no attention.

A little later Mrs. Smith noticed them

and smiled approvingly upon the elder girl:

"That is very kind of you, Margaret, my dear. I am glad you are interested in our little stranger."

"Oh, I haven't been kind, and I'm not at all interested," answered Margaret, with calm frankness: "I only didn't want her tormented. I took a kitten away from some boys the other day—but I don't like cats." The last sentence was uttered reflectively—rather to herself, it seemed, than to another.

Mrs. Smith passed on with a curious expression upon her face, and there was a wondering look on Unity's as she stole a sly glance at her companion. Margaret was her senior by some four or five years, and her tall, slender figure, cool, unchildlike face and self-possessed manner made her appear much older than she was. Mrs. Smith's remark had, however, produced some impression, for after a moment she turned and looked more attentively at her small protégée.

"Did you tell that boy your name was Unity?" she suddenly demanded. "What made them give you such an odd name?"

"'Cause it was almost the last word my mother spoke when she was dying—when I was a wee baby," explained Unity, timidly, not quite knowing whether this stately young lady would view the peculiar circumstances as any extenuation.

"Your mother is dead, then?" Margaret's face softened a little: she also was motherless. "Did anybody dress you up to come here? or did you run away?"

"I—I came when nobody knew," admitted Unity, forced into confession. "My folks don't know much about parties."

"I should suppose not. Well," with a still keener scrutiny, "you wouldn't look so bad if you hadn't your hair tied back in that tight, straight way, and if that—Come up stairs after supper, and I'll fix you over a little—" she interrupted herself.

Half grateful for what she dimly perceived to be an unusual effort on the part of her companion, half humiliated, though without comprehending why, Unity slowly nodded her acceptance of the proposal. She would scarcely have dared to decline even had she wished to do so; and when, as they passed

into the hall again, Margaret said, "Now come," she followed silently.

The pleasant dressing-room was unoccupied, much to Margaret's satisfaction, and at once she began her self-imposed task. She drew the brown hair from its close confinement, gave it a few skillful touches with brush and comb, let it fall a little lower on the forehead and allowed its natural curliness to appear:

"There! that's better. Look!"

The glass clearly indicated an improvement, and Unity's eyes acknowledged it at the first glance.

"As for the rest," pursued the young dressing-maid, glancing doubtfully over her attire, "I don't know. If you want to wear this," touching the cape, "it wouldn't be so very bad if it were a little shorter here, so the ends could tie back like a sash;" and, catching up a pair of scissors, she hastily cut into the lace and ribbon.

"Oh!" gasped Unity, in horror, divining her intention only by its accomplishment and shrinking as if the flimsy fabric had been her own flesh.

"Why, what's the matter? I didn't hurt you," began Margaret, in astonishment.

But the color that for an instant had crimsoned the child's cheek and brow vanished. She sank down in a chair and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed piteously:

"Oh, what shall I do? You've cut it! you've cut it! And it's—Lucretia's—better—most—cape!"

"Well, I'm sure I didn't think the absurd old thing was of any value," said Margaret, with a dismay that was considerably tinged with disgust. "I'm very sorry," she added, rather stiffly. She had no sympathy to offer for a grief that seemed so utterly uncalled for and so incomprehensible; but no words could just then have availed anything with the poor forlorn little maiden.

Mrs. Smith, suspecting that Unity might have left home without permission, sought her with a package of cakes, to advise, as delicately as possible, her early return. But the suggestion was unnecessary. The child had already made her preparations for departure, and, with her coarse straw hat

pulled low over her eyes, was anxious only to escape from the house.

Such a heavy little heart it was, such weary, lagging feet, that slowly went down the long road! A miserable failure had the whole experiment been. Going to a party with other girls had not made her like them. She had been different all the time; everybody had seen it and known it; and now had come this wretched ending. She would never try again, she whispered to herself with trembling lips, and she never wanted to see any of them again—never! In the depth of her childish grief and shame she almost wished she could die.

We speak lightly of childhood's sorrows because we understand them so little. To the latest day of her after-life Unity could distinctly remember how dreary the long stretch of road looked that afternoon, the soiled and dusty daisies by the wayside, and a bird perched on the straggling rail-fence that so mockingly chirped his good-night song.

She had stopped crying. Her heart seemed to herself too numb and despairing

to care much for anything any more—even for Lucretia's condemnation, which was sweeping and unstinted. That she had known no better than to go to a party without an "invite"! What must they have thought of her? Then to slip off without permission, and to borrow her—Lucretia's—things without leave, and finally to ruin her best cape! She rehearsed it all in general and in particular, and painted it in its full enormity.

"And now, Unity Dodge, you'll go straight to bed without a bite of supper, or I declare for't I'll tell your pa all about it," she concluded.

Supper Unity had already had, and her own bare little room, where no human eyes could look upon her, was the one ark of refuge she was longing to reach; so she gladly crept away up the back stairs as soon as she was allowed to do so. She did not know what her father would think of the transaction. Of course he would be angry, and perhaps he might be dreadfully mortified, too, because she had gone without an invitation. Oh, if she had only known about that!

"But I didn't do the best I knew how, or I wouldn't have slipped off so," she finally acknowledged to herself in the midst of her trouble and self-abasement.

Stirred by her own conscience, but still more by Lucretia's estimate of her misdoing, she dared not lay her aching little head upon its pillow until she had whispered a prayer for pardon, even though her only thought of God was linked with the dread inspired by her father's constant searching into signs and wonders and his frequent predictions of coming woes. She had little knowledge of heavenly tenderness, yet doubtless the plea she sobbed out had more weight there than it had in Lucretia's judgment:

"I'm just me, and I've no mother, like other little girls!"

CHAPTER II.

TIMES AND HALF TIMES.

NOTWITHSTANDING her half promise not to report the matter to Dr. Dodge, at the breakfast-table Lucretia could not resist the temptation of recounting Unity's *début* in fashionable society. She had been greatly mollified by the package of cake left on her work-stand, and by discovering that her cape could easily be mended. The next morning the whole affair appeared to her in an exceedingly ludicrous light—entirely "too good a joke to keep," as she expressed it; and she accordingly related it in detail to the older members of the family.

It was not usually easy to arouse Dr. Dodge to any very animated interest in passing events, but the one thing in this sublunary sphere that he occasionally noticed, and always to mention with a sneer, was what he termed the "fuss and feathers of fashionable simpletons." All

stylish dress, house-furniture, entertainments and modes of life generally, were indiscriminately condemned as "silly, extravagant and absurd," and the sole plan he had ever been heard to express concerning his daughter's education was that her "head should not be filled with foolish new-fangled notions."

Lucretia's recital delighted him:

"Marched right in among them in that rig, did she? Well, that was plucky! A regular take-off of all their fuss and finery." The doctor leaned back in his chair and laughed, and even sober, undemonstrative John smiled very broadly. "Rigged herself in anything she could pick up, and then called herself as fine as anybody and marched coolly into the middle of their party! I do believe she's a clear Dodge, that girl. I declare, it was plucky; I'd have given something to see it.—See here, Sis: dollars aren't plenty with me, but that was worth one, and you shall have it to buy whatever you please;" and the doctor pulled out his old wallet, and, searching out a silver dollar, placed it in Unity's hand.

That was an unexpected outgrowth of her

yesterday's tribulation, but Unity scarcely knew whether Lucretia's reproaches or her father's laughter had been hardest to bear. The kind of approval he had manifested only the more fully convinced her that she had committed some dreadful blunder, and she sat on the low doorstep and looked down with a very sober face upon the money in her hand, while she tried to decide what to do with it. She had offered it to Lucretia first, to buy a new cape.

"Dear me, no, child! What should I do that for?" said Lucretia, with her good-nature fully restored. "I wouldn't have cared so much about it last night if it hadn't been my very bettermost. I looked it over this morning, and I see I can mend it up and put a little more ribbon over it, so it'll never show and be as handsome as ever. You just buy whatever you like. You may go up to the Centre alone, if you want to, and buy whatever you please."

What did Unity want to buy? Yesterday she would have liked twenty things, any one of which this might procure, but to-day she did not care for them:

"It wouldn't make any difference if I had them; I'd be just Unity Dodge. And my very name is queer: they said so. Besides, they didn't think Lucretia's cape was pretty, either; that Margaret-girl called it 'horrid.' I won't try any more, and I won't care."

So, in a spasm of what Lucretia called "hard common sense"—it certainly was hard—she trudged up to the first store, picked out a stout gingham, in womanly fashion inquired into its washing and wearing qualities, as she had heard Lucretia do, and bought it without the least regard to its lack of beauty.

Notwithstanding her determination not to care, Unity did long for some encouragement in her course when she reached home and viewed its ugliness afresh. It was so far removed from anything like "fuss and feathers" that she thought it must appear to her father something eminently sensible, and a new idea occurred to her.

"Do you think he gave me the money 'specially, you know— Do you think father'd like to see what I bought?" she asked, timidly, of Lucretia.

That worthy woman paused to reflect.

"Well, I don't know," she answered, doubtfully. "You might try."

So Unity went up stairs to the large room where books, papers, jars, bottles, surgical instruments, charts and long tables of figures appeared, to an uninstructed eye, to be reveling in dust and disorder; for in that apartment the doctor would allow no "setting to rights" but his own. He opened the door after Unity's hesitating knock had been twice repeated, but he held a paper in one hand and a book in the other:

"Well, child, who's sick now? I can't be disturbed unless it's a very serious case, I really can't."

"Nobody's sick; it's only me. I—"

"You? Can't Lucretia give you some catnip or a warm bath, or something? She ought to know what to do—a woman of her age," said the doctor, with his eyes wandering back to the paper he held.

"I'm not sick, father; I just bought my dress," explained Unity, half retreating. "The money you gave me, you know."

"Somebody gave it to you, eh? Yes, it's

pretty—very pretty. But run away now, for I am exceedingly busy." He had entirely forgotten the talk of the morning.

The child glanced at his face and slowly withdrew.

"What did he say?" questioned Lucretia as she quietly came back to the kitchen.

"He didn't say—anything," hesitating over the reply.

"Now, I'll venture he didn't, either," soliloquized Lucretia, watching the little girl as she went back to her seat on the steps. "He's so amazingly busy trying to find out about the times and half times of Daniel that he never finds out his own family don't have no kind of times. If he'd just let the wheels of 'Zekiel alone and grease up the wheels of his own old chaise, and 'tend to pills instead of prophecy for a while, there'd be less need to scrimp and save and make one dollar do the work of two in this house. It's a body's duty to study the Bible—I'm willing to allow it is," admitted Lucretia, a little reluctantly as she remembered her own remissness in that line—"but letting everything else go

and trying to study signs and mysteries, so's we can calculate when the end of the world will come, ain't the use we was put into the world for, nohow. I don't believe it!"

Not in the least would Lucretia's opinion have troubled the doctor even had he known it. He was again absorbed in his books and papers the instant the interruption had ceased. There had been a time when medical works occupied his study-hours, but that was long since past. Now, as he sometimes exultantly assured himself, he was "studying the symptoms and feeling the pulse of the universe," and it did not occur to him that his great subject profited by none of his prescriptions and paid him no fees. In earlier years he had gained quite a large practice for a country physician, and that, with the proceeds of the farm, had placed him in comparatively easy circumstances. With no ambition for a pretentious establishment and a contempt for fashion and all its requirements, his one idea of luxury had been books and scientific appliances. These he had been amply able to

secure and to support his family in the simple, homely style which was all he cared to maintain, and which his wife, who always seemed rather a pale reflection of himself than a separate and positive individuality, never seriously attempted to change.

What had first turned the doctor's studies into their present channel it would be difficult to recall. Some book that came to his hand, perhaps, some lecture or newspaper article, had aroused him to an advocacy or a refutation of its theories. However it happened, a pamphlet of his upon prophecy and the signs of the times awakened, unfortunately, a wider than local interest, and so stimulated him to further writing and renewed research. If he did not really believe that the mantle of the prophets had fallen upon him, as some of his neighbors asserted, he at least became convinced that he was a very keen and skillful interpreter of prophecy; and the farther he pursued the subject, the more fascinated he became. He attended the meetings of "Millerites" and "Adventists," wholly agreeing with none of their views, but revising and sub-

stituting theories of his own wherever it seemed to him necessary.

That first faint puff of fame was all that came to Dr. Dodge. His later papers and treatises attracted little attention, but, absorbed in his investigations, he scarcely noticed the fact. Meanwhile, his medical practice gradually decreased. People whispered that the doctor thought the next world so near at hand that he did not consider it worth while to exert himself much to keep his patients in this one. In truth, his mind was so occupied with other thoughts that he found it difficult to give his patients the care and consideration he had once bestowed. He grew absent-minded, forgetful, and sometimes neglectful; so, when a young physician settled in the village—one alert, well read and skillful, keeping himself well informed and profiting by all new discoveries in his profession—Dr. Dodge's practice naturally drifted to him. The farm suffered also. Hired help with little oversight greatly drained its profits, and fences, outbuildings, the farm-house itself, told a story of neglect. All these changes came slowly, and the doctor,

busied with the wheels of Ezekiel's visions, did not notice that those of the domestic machinery "drave heavily."

When little Unity, the one daughter of the house, was born, the tired-out, spiritless mother died. Already she had seen that which made her fear the possible disintegration of the family, and her last words were a feeble wish that they might "all live together in unity." The desire gave a name to the wee motherless maiden, if it accomplished nothing more.

Strong-armed, practical Lucretia Gill—a very distant relative of the family, who had taken care of Mrs. Dodge in her illness—remained in charge of the household, and the doctor went back to his books and buried himself more deeply than ever in his studies. Now by one key, now by another, he was sure he had obtained the means of unlocking the mysteries of the Revelation and of proclaiming to the world "the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." When one ingenious method of calculation failed, he devised another; and again and again he was certain he had dis-

covered the exact date of that day which the Christ himself has declared no man knoweth—"no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Throughout all her childhood Unity had heard very little of the loving, pitying Lord who blessed the children, healed the sick and died to save the guilty, very few of his teachings of gentleness, unselfishness and trustful love. But she had heard much of woes, signs and wonders, of "seals" and "vials," until she shrank from the sight of a Bible, and shuddered sometimes when she saw through her father's window the light which was often burning far into the night. Almost it seemed as if some awful incantation were in progress there to hasten the coming of rending skies and crumbling worlds.

Once she had spent an entire day—one of those set apart by her father's prediction as the date of dire events and wonders—in an agony of apprehension and terror too great for words. She had started at every sound, and had been shocked and frightened at the indifference of Warren and Reub, who on a morning like that could pack lunch-basket

and tackle and calmly go off on a fishing-excursion. For hours she had hidden away in the old barn, trying in her ignorant, childish fashion to pray and make herself "good," and trembling at every creaking of the great door, every rustling of the wind in the trees, until at last the long, bright afternoon wore itself away in purple and gold and the sun went down as peacefully as ever. She was relieved, but bewildered; and afterward she ventured to ask Reub—the brother nearest her own age, though five or six years her senior—if he had not been alarmed.

"No; I didn't believe much about it."

"But how could you help it? Father said so.

"Well, father thinks so many things, you see. I don't know, only he said the same thing before and it didn't come," answered Reub, hesitatingly.

After that, though the predictions always troubled her, Unity was able to receive them with a few grains of comforting doubt. Her father was certainly very wise, but then, as she whispered to herself with better logic

than rhetoric, "he sometimes don't always know."

The old farmhouse was a shelter, but not a home. It held the different members of the family, but for years there had been no family-life. Lucretia kept the house clean, the rooms in order, prepared the meals and saw that the clothes were properly washed, ironed and mended; and she knew of nothing more that was needed. Perhaps only little Unity clearly felt that anything was missing, and she did not understand what or why. John, the eldest son, had gradually taken the management of the farm more upon himself, until for the last two or three years, since he had reached manhood, it had been almost entirely under his control. From that time, indeed, it had been slowly improving. A quiet, methodical, plodding fellow was John, with no flights of fancy, no taste for the books his father so loved, but steady, industrious and economical. The latter trait was perhaps developing unduly. It might have been his father's carelessness and unthrift in some ways that had driven him to the opposite extreme, but people

already began to speak of him as "shrewd at a bargain" and "close." He was exceedingly cautious in his expenditures, and cared very little for dress or for the amusements of young men; but then he scarcely seemed a young man. Unity considered him almost as old as her father, and felt even less acquainted with him.

Warren and Reub were younger—boys of fifteen and thirteen, nearer to each other in age, and also in tastes and companionship, than any other two of the family. Their chief pursuit, as John viewed it, was to shirk as much work as possible, and John's, from their point of observation, was to exact all that they could be made to do. Still, as John was slow of temper and of tongue, persistent rather than authoritative, there was little open clashing. The younger brothers grumbled and evaded, but seldom positively rebelled.

Unity was accustomed to it all. That John should want one thing and Warren and Reub another; that her father should be calmly oblivious of the rights or wrongs of either party unless directly and most

perseveringly appealed to; that Lucretia should churn, bake and sing undisturbed by any of the jarring elements; and that she should herself hover along on the borders of this daily life without really seeming to belong to it or to be much needed or noticed by any one as a part of it,—all appeared to the child natural by its familiarity. She was therefore astonished when Lucretia, moved by some unwonted reflections upon the day's doings, suddenly announced at the tea-table:

"Dr. Dodge, I think it's high time Unity was sent to school somewheres."

"I have no objection," answered the doctor, absently—"no objection, Lucretia."

"Well, but there's got to be something more done about it than not objecting, if she is ever a-goin'," proceeded Lucretia, a trifle impatiently. "I don't know as anybody's objected this long time, but she's never been to school a day yet; and she's eight years old, and goin' on nine."

The last clause was added with an emphasis that seemed to say such "goin' on" had been entirely unexpected. It made Unity feel, in

the midst of her surprise, very old, and somewhat guilty therefor.

It also aroused the doctor:

"Well, I— Eh, Lucretia? I didn't quite catch what you were saying. Something about a school?"

"I said Unity Dodge ought to be a-goin' to school by this time."

The doctor glanced at his small daughter, glanced at the clock and then at the boys, and looked thoroughly bewildered. If it were school-time for her, why not for them? Did schools begin later now? or was it some new kind of school? And what had he to do with their not being on their way in proper time?

No one of these questions had he opportunity to ask, for Lucretia saw and forestalled them with the sharpness that she occasionally allowed herself as a prerogative of her relationship:

"No, I don't s'pose you've thought anything about it, Dr. Dodge. I don't know as anybody ever would think anything about it if I didn't speak, and that's what I'm sayin'. Here's Unity eight years old

now and never been to school in all her life."

"Hasn't she? Eight years! I'd no idea she was so old—though the time seems long enough in some ways, too;" and the doctor sighed. "Well, fix her up and let her go to school with the boys, Lucretia. What's to hinder?"

Reub looked particularly dissatisfied.

"It'll be no end of bother to have her always tagging along and to have to take care of her," he muttered. "We can't have a bit of fun with the boys, and we'll have to start the week beforehand to get there in time."

That, however, was not exactly a reason to be urged to his father, and he bethought him of a better one.

"I think there'll be a good deal to hinder," he said. "It's a pretty long walk to the Centre school, and she can't go half the time in winter, on account of the snow and the roads, nor in summer when it rains; and she can't go all alone. She wouldn't be in the same room with us, either, and all the baby classes are out earlier than

ours; so she'll have to stay 'round and wait."

"The country school at the Forks is nearer—not more than half so far," observed John, slowly. "It isn't much of a school, unless it has improved since I was a youngster; but I suppose it might do to begin with."

"I don't care what one, so it's a school," declared Lucretia, with a liberalism equaled only by that of those who in the same way settle questions concerning an eternal future.

The doctor looked relieved, and the matter was decided.

Lucretia had taught the child the alphabet and to read in short words in the same way that she had taught her to "sew patchwork" and to "say her prayers;" and now she had a comfortable conviction that her whole educational duty was accomplished.

But Unity was overwhelmed with dismay. She was sensitive and sore from her recent unsuccessful plunge into society. She had no desire to repeat the experiment, and to be thrust quite out into the world in this way was dreadful.

"Oh, Lucretia, why did you say anything about it?" she cried.

"Well, child, you didn't expect you could spend your whole life sitting on a wood-pile and thinking of nothing in particular, did you?" retorted Lucretia, contemptuously. "Learnin' is a good thing; I'll say that, if I hain't got much of it myself. Besides, it don't stand to decency for Dr. Dodge to let his daughter grow up like a heathen.—He'll come near enough to it, any way, if he's let alone, I'll warrant," she added, in an undertone.—"Pshaw, child! you'll like it well enough after a little while. It's better for you."

She was right. It checked in a measure the broodings and introspection that were making the little girl morbid and unchildlike, and forced her into new companionship. It was the beginning of a more healthful life.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN'S WIFE.

LUCRETIA had been unusually busy for weeks. She had taken an unwonted time for house-cleaning—an extra house-cleaning between the spring and fall. That accomplished, she began to overlook and remodel her wardrobe in vigorous fashion, and one day brought from the attic an old trunk in which to place some of her clothing.

"Why don't you keep them where you always have?" questioned Unity, wonderingly. "What do you want to put them in that for?"

"So they'll be ready to send off," answered Lucretia, crisply. "I'm going away."

The brown eyes opened wider. Unity would as soon have expected the roof or the foundation of the house to go away; indeed, it seemed not unlike the latter, to think of Lucretia going.

"Why, Lu—cre—tia Gill!" she exclaimed as soon as she could find breath. "Away? Where?"

"West, to some of my kin. I've got places enough, only my plans aren't rightly laid yet."

"And what will we do?"

"I don't know." Lucretia pursed her lips, possibly to hide a momentary quivering. "There's some of you thinks they can get along well enough. John does."

That name only added to Unity's bewilderment by suggesting a new reason for remaining:

"Well, I shouldn't think you'd want to go now, when John's just had the house all painted."

Lucretia smiled at that.

"I don't s'pose he'd have taken the trouble to paint it if he'd thought I was a-going to stay," she said—"I mean, if he'd thought I was going to stay the same way I have been. I'm bound to say he asked me not to go."

"And who will take care of us?" pursued Unity, not in the least enlightened.

"Why, your new sister, I s'pose, if any-

body does. Child, you ain't as wise as some of your years, or you'd have seen the drift of things. John's going to be married."

"My new sister!" Unity slowly repeated the words.

"Of course! John's wife will be your sister, won't she?"

John's havings or doings seldom appealed to Unity as anything that concerned or interested her, though she had been surprised and delighted by the recent improvements in the place. John's wife might have been viewed with indifference, but a new sister for herself! That was quite another aspect of the case. With a quick throb of joy, she repeated the words softly under her breath. A new sister all her own—an older sister such as other girls had! It was too blissful to be true. The color came to her cheeks and her eyes sparkled.

"Are you in really, truly earnest?" she demanded, eagerly.

"John thinks he is, and that is more to the purpose," replied Lucretia.

In the two or three years of her school-life Unity had learned many things not

marked in the curriculum, and among them more clearly to comprehend some of the ways in which her home was unlike other homes. She had envied some of her schoolmates the elder sisters who helped them in their studies, their plans and their amusements, but the possibility of such a possession for herself had never before occurred to her. A host of happy visions arose with the thought, but in the midst of them she remembered what Lucretia had said of her departure.

"But I don't want you to go away, Lucretia," she urged, wonderingly. "Why, it's your home here, isn't it? And when you've always lived here, I don't see why you want to go away now, when everything will be so nice."

"Maybe it will, and then maybe it won't." Lucretia paused abruptly. Whatever wisdom she lacked, she was at least able to discern the folly and selfishness of any attempt to prejudice the child against the new comer. "John said he wanted me to stay right along; but when anybody's been first so long, they can't be comfort'ble to have some-

body else set over 'em and take the reins right out of their hands. 'Twould seem queer to have a stranger tellin' me when to use the preserves I put up myself, and how to do the work in this house, where I've done it my own way these ten years. I couldn't noways stay."

If Lucretia understood little of child-nature in general, and less of this child's in particular, if she had crossed and hurt and made the young life barren and hard in countless ways, she had yet meant to be kind, and much of real kindness and care she had given. It was the only substitute for mother-love Unity had known, and the brown eyes filled with tears.

"There, child! you needn't fret," Lucretia interposed, hastily. "Nobody sends me off. I want to go for a spell, and I can come back again if I don't like it."

The few days of waiting that followed were for the little girl full of pleasant expectancy and wonderful dreams. She lost sight of all probabilities concerning John's wife, and imagined all delightful impossibilities concerning her new sister—what she

would be and do and the marvelous changes that would be wrought. Sober John would have smiled had he known her fancies, but she asked him no questions.

Unity never thought of questioning John about anything. She persuaded Lucretia to substitute fresh muslin curtains for the green paper ones in the room arranged for the new comer. Curtains of any sort were an innovation in the farmhouse. In earlier days, when Dr. Dodge had paid some heed to domestic affairs, window-hangings were among the articles he derided as nonsensical, not being "able to discover why anybody should make windows for the express purpose of letting light into the house, and then hang something over them to keep it out." Lucretia had gratified her taste by introducing a few gay paper shades into what she considered her own particular domain, but many of the windows still kept their primitive unsoftened barrenness, and these added to the dreary, unhomelike look of the plainly-furnished rooms by their unblinking glare.

Unity had given various little touches of

her own to that one apartment, and on the last morning searched garden and grove for a few late autumn flowers for its adorning.

Lucretia bestowed a dubious glance upon the treasures thus carefully gathered.

"If there was any roses or laylocks, 'twould seem worth while, but 'tain't likely anybody'll care for them berries and vines, and such truck," she remarked.

Unity hesitated. There were people who did care for them, she knew. She had seen them in other homes, and she saw beauty in them. Perhaps her new sister would think as she did.

"Sisters 'most always do think alike," she whispered to herself, with a happy little thrill at her heart, as she arranged the trailing vines and scarlet berries in the old vase—the only one the house afforded.

"There, now!" said Lucretia, when the early dinner had been hurried out of the way and the kitchen put into its neatest order. "Everything is as ready as it can be. The house is spick and span all over; I've rubbed up the tins till you can see your face in 'em; there's plenty of fresh bread in

the pantry; there's pumpkin-pies and apple-pies and crullers that's good enough for the king, if I do say it myself. I don't see what more anybody could want."

Unity's willing little hands had contributed their share toward this high state of readiness, growing stiff and rough through much egg-beating and dish-washing. They trembled with nervous haste that afternoon as she donned a clean dress and brushed her brown hair with painstaking care, even though there remained two or three hours of waiting before the expected arrival. She considered it exceedingly fortunate that a school vacation had occurred at so auspicious a period. Still, that long afternoon dragged heavily. She could not resort to any of her usual employments lest she should in some way disarrange her attire or the house. Even Lucretia ventured upon nothing more commonplace than knitting as she sat stiffly, in the stiffest of starched calicoes, in the creaking wooden rocking-chair.

With no other occupation than dreaming, Unity's imagination ran wild.

"I wonder whether— Maybe she plays the piano and sings," she exclaimed, with a sudden ecstatic thought.

"Well, seein' John Dodge is John Dodge, it ain't likely he's married a serypheme nor any other kind of an angel," replied Lucretia, a trifle vexed by such extravagant anticipations. "And I'm free to say *she* hain't," she added, ambiguously and under her breath.

"I wish," she remarked, presently, "that a body could coax Dr. Dodge to fix up a little and put on his coat at supper-time 'stead of coming down in that old dressin'-gown that looks as if it had been used for a pen-wiper for ginerations. I don't s'pose I can do it, though; and if I can't, why she'll just have to commence as she's likely to go on, that's all." The emphasis on the last personal pronoun rendered the meaning of the concluding sentence more apparent.

In truth, Dr. Dodge was bestowing very little thought upon his prospective daughter-in-law, though he had been somewhat startled when first the tidings concerning her intro-

duction into the household had been made known to him.

"It's my opinion, John," he said, when his son had succeeded in drawing his attention to the communication he wished to make—"my opinion from careful study—that the time for marrying and giving in marriage in this world is nearly past."

"But it's been your opinion that the time for farming and all that sort of thing was over too, father; and we should all have been pretty badly off if I had been of your mind," urged practical John.

"As nearly as I can judge from the signs of the times and a most careful calculation of the prophecies," pursued the doctor, ignoring or not hearing this reply, "this world will last but little longer than the present generation."

"Oh, well, I don't expect to outlast the present generation myself," said John. "I suppose few people who are of it do, but that doesn't seem to prevent their trying to do the best they can for themselves while they are here."

Dr. Dodge looked at his son meditatively,

and then suddenly aroused to a consciousness that his own words might be understood as uttered in opposition to the project.

"I'm not objecting, John. I was a little surprised at first. Though I don't know why I should have been," he continued, reflectively. "My mind has been so occupied lately! But I have no objection to offer. You have managed the farm, as you say, and it is only fair that you should do it in your own way. Do as you think best, John."

Once brought to a consideration of the subject, he was willing to discuss it at length and settle upon the terms under which John should retain control of the place until the younger children should be of age, and what share of the property should eventually be theirs and his. He drew a sigh of relief when the agreement was completed and the papers duly signed:

"I am glad it's done. I have thought sometimes that I ought to attend to it and arrange something of the sort. I'm glad it is off my mind now. Campbell did you say the young lady's name is?"

"Temple, sir—Rhoda Temple."

"Oh! Well, I hope you'll be happy, John, for the little time there is remaining—less than half a century now, unless my calculations are strangely at fault;" and he went back to his study again, and would soon have forgotten the expected change in the family had it not been occasionally recalled to his mind by others.

Whatever views Warren and Reub held upon the subject they confided solely to each other. The only feeling they manifested was curiosity, and afterward, as the time drew near, embarrassment and annoyance at the prospect of a stranger's presence. Visitors were almost unknown in their household history, and the imposing air of preparation which the whole house wore, together with Lucretia's avowed purpose of having the first supper in the room adjoining the kitchen, awed and abashed them as something exceedingly formal and ceremonious.

Reub murmured discontentedly:

"I don't know how to stand so much fuss. Just give me my supper in the kitchen, won't you, Lucretia?"

"No, I won't," responded Lucretia, promptly. "You'll just have to brush up for once and come into the room like civilized folks, or not a bite of supper will you get anywhere. You don't s'pose your new sister'll want to eat you, do you?"

"She ain't my new sister: she's only John's wife," muttered Reub. "And I want to eat my supper in peace without any dressed-up fine ladies."

Nevertheless, the mingling of threat and exhortation, seconded by Warren's example, had so much effect that when the important afternoon arrived Reub came home an hour earlier than usual; and when a rattle of wheels at last announced the carriage, he was observed, wearing his best jacket and with his hair brushed to an extraordinary degree of smoothness, suddenly to dodge around a corner.

Even Unity, with all her eagerness, shrank back timidly when Warren had taken the horses and when John, with a brown-veiled figure beside him, stood on the steps. She heard Lucretia greet the stranger as "Mis' Dodge," and for an instant wondered at the

name. There was a brief exchange of remarks upon the roughness of the roads and the chilliness of the autumn evening, a little rustle and bustle, and then they stood by the hearthstone; and the veil was thrown aside in the light of the open fire—the one cheerful appointment of the room.

"This here is Unity, Mis' Dodge," explained Lucretia as she took bonnet and wraps.

"My sister, Rhoda," John added to the introduction, looking back over his shoulder from giving directions to Warren.

Unity's trembling little hand met a gloved one for a moment; she was hurriedly kissed in the midst of the unwrapping, and slipped shyly back to her former post of observation. She had meant to whisper, as her very first greeting, how glad she was to have a sister, but it did not seem quite the right thing to say, after all, and she was silent.

"Now I'll hurry round and get supper right away, for you must be 'most starved and tired out with your long ride," remarked Lucretia, swiftly deciding upon the easiest way of filling the first awkward half hour.

"Oh, you needn't hurry on my account," answered Mrs. John, in a clear, quick, rather highly-pitched voice. "I'm not one of the kind that tires out so easily;" and with a short, satisfied laugh she settled herself in the creaking old rocking-chair. "This fire feels comfortable, though," she added, holding out her hands to its warmth.

"Cold coming over the hill?" questioned Lucretia.

"Pretty chilly—yes."

Then the door closed upon Lucretia, and the old clock in the corner ticked slowly, deliberately and with embarrassing distinctness, while Unity pondered whether she ought to speak and what she should say. Meanwhile, she furtively watched the face opposite her—a brown, healthful, not unhandsome face with rosy cheeks and keen black eyes that seemed to see everything at a glance.

Presently the eyes turned full upon the little girl:

"So you are Unity?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And the two boys are older? That was

Warren, I suppose, that came out to the wagon?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I don't believe I spoke to him. And Reuben? Where is he?"

"I guess—he ran away somewhere," explained Unity, hesitatingly.

"Scared, I'll warrant. Just like a boy!" Mrs. John laughed again. "And then there's your father; and that's all the family," she added, reflectively, as if to herself. "What room is this?" she suddenly questioned.

"The dining-room; only we don't hardly ever eat here," answered Unity, honestly.

"No, I suppose not; it makes too much fuss." The black eyes scanned the dimensions of the apartment. "And where do all those doors go? No matter, though; I'd like to look round a bit as soon as I get warm."

"Have you any little sisters at home?" Unity ventured to ask when a moment's silence had fallen.

"Oh yes; there are Sis and Dely. The boys, too. The house always had children enough."

"Won't you be lonesome without them?" questioned the little girl, sympathizingly.

"Oh, I guess not. It's only twenty miles, and I can go back now and then. Besides, I'm not one of the fretting kind, specially after a houseful of children." She laughed a little. "I think folks ought to do what they think is the best thing, and then not fret about it."

"Yes," admitted Unity, slowly. Such wisdom seemed so very far beyond her!

Lucretia re-entered and began to spread the table, affording Unity the relief of assisting her, and took upon herself the burden of sociability by such inquiries as she could think of concerning Mrs. John's native place and the grain and fruit crop in that locality. Dr. Dodge did not appear, though he had been privately notified of the arrival. John, after his three days' absence, found a variety of matters to look after in the barn and yard, and neither Warren nor Reub could have been induced to present himself until the last possible moment.

So the conversation in the dining-room dragged somewhat heavily until Lucretia,

in placing some of the dishes upon the table, mentioned the plums she had preserved. Then an enumeration of stores began, passing from cans of fruit and jars of pickles to the contents of the linen-closet. Inquiries and explanations became animated, and the subject lasted until supper was announced by Lucretia's loud call from the kitchen door.

Dr. Dodge had donned his coat—"Because I put it right where he couldn't very well get down stairs without stumbling over it," Lucretia accounted for it, in an aside—and he greeted his new daughter-in-law very kindly:

"I hope you will be happy here, and you must at once make yourself at home in your own way. I am very busy myself and not about the house much, but you will not miss that."

The boys were rather bashful and awkward, and Reub was somewhat gruff in his efforts to hide all discomfort under an air of unconcern.

The brief introductions over, they hurried to the table. It was a plentiful repast,

well cooked and well served, but a somewhat constrained and silent party gathered around it, nevertheless. Indeed, the meals at the farmhouse were usually silent. John never talked much, nor did the doctor, of late years, except when launched upon his favorite topic. But probably none of the family had realized the dearth of conversation until the presence of this stranger made it painfully noticeable. She might have been pardoned if, under all the circumstances, she had felt drearily homesick that evening.

Unity, without fully understanding her own thought, wondered if she did. While her father read in his slow, sonorous voice of the vials of wrath and the battle-plains of Armageddon, the child furtively watched her new sister's face to see if she too shrank from the coming terrors, and from her father's interpolated prophecies, and from the prayer—if that could be called a prayer which partook so largely of an attempt to explain to God his own mysteries—which followed.

Family worship was a curious institution

in that household. John usually went about his work in the morning without waiting for it, and in the evening he drowsed through it. It was an old habit of his father's—a part of the familiar routine. It did not occur to him to question its reason, its use or its abuse; he was simply accustomed to it: that was all. Warren and Reub absented themselves as much as possible, which was frequently enough, for the doctor often failed to notice whether or not the family were all present. Once a teacher in the Sunday-school—the young Dodges rarely attended—had been urging the value of sacred music, and asked Reuben if he did not think it would be pleasant, when a chapter was read in family worship at home, to sing an appropriate hymn. The boy replied that he "didn't know of any that would suit their chapters unless it were 'Day of Wrath' or 'Hark from the Tombs,'" thereby drawing upon himself a reproof for irreverence. But he had spoken the simple truth. Week after week, month after month, Dr. Dodge read and prayed with no regard to life's daily varying needs,

but with vision fixed on far-away momentous events. The older children paid little heed to any of it, and Unity's dread had been greatly dulled by familiarity. She only shivered a little now and then when her wandering thoughts—she was glad to have them wander—were recalled by the words, and she drew a long breath of relief when the exercise ended and she could escape from the room and shake off the thought of it, as some ghostly presence, in the sunshine of the outer world. On this particular evening she wondered whether the new comer had any such feeling about it, and when she should be well enough acquainted to dare to ask her or to talk with her about such things. The comfortable, rosy face betrayed no trouble. In truth, Mrs. John had long before had information, considerably exaggerated, concerning Dr. Dodge and his eccentricities, and while he read she was mentally calculating how many yards of carpeting that room required.

The two boys slipped away the moment the "Amen" was uttered. John went out

for a final inspection of the stable to assure himself that all was safe for the night; Lucretia departed, on a similar errand, to the kitchen; and then Unity, finding herself once more alone with the object of her many dreams, ventured to slip to her side, steal an arm shyly around her neck and whisper,

"You are my sister now, ain't you? I guess we'll soon learn to love each other, won't we?"

"Why, what a start you gave me, Sis!" Mrs. John laughed. "I didn't hear you coming. Why, of course I'm your sister—or sister-in-law: it ain't quite the same thing. Yes, I expect we'll get along first rate together. I'm no great hand to make a fuss over anybody; it isn't my way, and I don't think it amounts to much, anyhow. But I've no fears about our getting along all right. Suppose you show me round the house a little more while we are waiting for the folks to come in."

Unity's arm had dropped from its momentary resting-place. She gravely took a lamp and led the way.

"When is that— Lucretia do you call her?"

"Lucretia Gill."

"Yes.—When is she going away?"

"To-morrow noon," answered Unity, a choking lump rising in her throat as she suddenly realized, more clearly than ever before, what Lucretia's going meant to her.

"Oh!" responded Mrs. John, cheerfully.

Then John's voice was heard calling "Rhoda!" and they separated for the night.

Unity did not know why her pillow grew wet with hot tears, or why she wished— there seemed no reason for that, whatever— that she had not placed the vase of tangled vines and bright berries in her sister-in-law's room.

Lucretia, passing through to her own apartment, stopped by the child's bedside, lamp in hand, and looked suspiciously down upon the flushed cheeks.

"What's the matter?" she asked, shortly,

"Nothing. I don't know," answered the little girl, truly enough.

"Well, see here," said Lucretia, with a sudden incisive wisdom which her remarks

did not usually possess: "the trouble with you is that you want to make the world and everybody in it to suit your own plan, and you can't do it. Things was mostly made before you came, and you'll have to learn to take 'em as you find 'em, child."

The next morning there was a thorough review of cellar and stores, an explanation of the contents of bottles and boxes; and then, having fully initiated her successor, Lucretia completed her packing. The light wagon was waiting to convey herself and her trunk to the railway-station, but she lingered long enough at the old red gate, after all other farewells were said, to turn and clasp Unity in a sudden bear-like hug, and to whisper, with a demonstrativeness the child had never witnessed before,

"I do b'lieve I love you better'n any other living creature, Unity Dodge; and if you're ever in need of anything I can do, let me know it."

Then she pulled down her green veil and was off before Unity fairly recovered from her surprise.

Indoors, Mrs. John surveyed her new

realm and hummed a gay snatch of song that seemed to indicate no melancholy at being left in undisputed possession of it, while she went over it once more alone. Out of doors, Unity watched the wagon until it was out of sight, and then went to the wood-pile—less sought since her school-days began—to meditate.

CHAPTER IV.

"MY HOUSE."

A WEEK later two large boxes arrived, and Mrs. John rubbed her hands gleefully when she saw them.

"Good! Now we can begin to fix up," she said to Unity.

"What is in them?" asked Unity, brightening in sympathy and with all a child's interest in hidden treasures.

"Some things of mine that the folks have sent on; I had them nearly all packed before I came away. Wait a little, till the morning work is out of the way, and you'll see."

It was no long waiting. Mistress Rhoda moved about in a brisk, energetic way; strong-handed, quick-sighted, she made every motion count and never took two steps for what could be accomplished in one. She could "turn off work as fast as the next one," she was wont to declare, with a little

satisfied nod of her head; and the boast was not an empty one.

John watched her with a pleased, satisfied air as she flew about the old farmhouse in her vigorous fashion; and if the sense of pride and pleasure was nearly identical with that awakened by his beautiful chestnut colt in the pasture—a feeling of having "made a good bargain," a scarcely conscious calculation of money value—she did not know it, nor was he aware of it.

"'When the pie was opened,
The birds began to sing,'"

laughed Unity as soon as the box-covers were knocked off and she got a glimpse of the assorted contents. "Oh, Rhoda, what lots of things!"

"Yes, but there are a good many dishes, and they take up so much of the space. I wish I had more furniture for the house; it needs it badly enough," answered Rhoda, reflectively, with an unspoken thought of the proceeds of future butter and eggs. "Well, now we'll see what we can do for this room."

It was the parlor, or sitting-room: "the room" Lucretia had always emphatically called it, in Western fashion. The shining cleanliness in which she had left it forestalled all labor in that direction, and its new mistress had only to arrange and alter as suited her. She introduced a new rocking-chair—not very comfortable, but in a high state of varnish and gay upholstery—and appointed it to a conspicuous place, while the old one was pushed farther back in a corner, a cushion manufactured for it and its back adorned with a tidy. A small table, a bright cover and two or three gilded books to lay upon it formed the next addition. After that the boxes furnished only small articles, but Unity watched and aided in their unpacking and arrangement with keen delight. Fringed and tasseled curtains were hung at the windows, and half a dozen pictures on the walls. A row of photographs, alternating with shells and little china mugs and vases, decorated the high mantel-piece, and tidies of all shapes and sizes were pinned and spread with a lavish hand. If these last presented only variety

instead of harmony of coloring; if the cheap prints on the walls were of a kind to have driven an artist wild; if the vases and mugs were neither old enough nor ugly enough to have gratified æsthetic taste and were valueless because they bore no hieroglyphics, but only such plain and flattering inscriptions as "To a Good Boy;" if the curtains were in no wise suited to the windows,—neither Unity nor Mrs. Rhoda knew it, and their complacency in their work was undisturbed.

Many times Unity paused in the doorway to survey the effect as the process of remodeling went on, and her brown eyes sparkled when at last it was completed.

"It looks like another room," pronounced Rhoda, well satisfied.

"I should think it did!" agreed Unity, enthusiastically. "Isn't it pretty now? Oh, Rhoda, won't it look nice when there is a fire here?"

"Yes, I expect so; but we sha'n't have it that way very often."

"Why, in the evenings, you know," explained Unity. "It'll soon be winter, and it's too cold now to sit here without any fire."

"Dear me, child! you don't suppose I mean to have all our own folks coming in here every day and using all these things for common? It would be all mussed up in no time. I want some place kept decent for company."

An ambitious plan that had been slowly growing in the little girl's brain—of bringing home some of her schoolmates to see Rhoda and proudly showing them into this room, "as nice as anybody's"—suddenly faded; but she said nothing.

Reub, coming home, stopped at the open door and stared in round-eyed wonder at the transformation. He whistled, and then his freckled face brightened.

"What do you think of it?" questioned Mrs. John.

"Stu—pen—jous!" replied Reub, searching for a word dignified enough for the occasion. "I say, won't this be a jolly place to sit in evenings and read by the firelight?"

"Only the firelight won't be here and you will have to do your reading somewhere else," laughed his sister-in-law. "You're as bad as Unity. As if I'd go to work and

fix up the room this way to have it all littered up every night!" and she composedly proceeded to darken the windows and close the doors.

"Hu—h!" muttered Reub, contemptuously, as he turned on his heel, all his interest banished at once.

Unity looked from one to the other in silence. However plain the old room had been under Lucretia's superintendence, it had always been free to whoever chose to use it. She was not sure that there was very much comfort in these darkened and locked-up improvements, after all. She wondered what her father would say. Not that he would be likely to care, or even to notice, but for the one fact that it was the room in which he was accustomed to hold the family worship.

John also remembered that, and informed his wife of it when she led him to inspect her work and explained her intention of not having it "used for common any longer."

"It's only that father is used to it, you see," he said, doubtfully. "I don't know

how he'll like to change. When he gets used to a thing, he always wants to stick to it."

"Well, he can get used to something else, then, I'm sure. Oh, I'll manage father easy enough. You'll see. You needn't worry about that. The long and short of it is, John, there's been a good deal of waste in this house, and we have got to economize if you and I are ever going to get ahead and make anything. There's no sense in keeping so many fires, for one thing."

"I suppose that's so," admitted John, admiringly.

When Dr. Dodge turned toward the familiar room that evening, Mrs. John looked up and remarked, as if it were the most natural of happenings,

"Oh, father, there's no fire in there to-night. I've been working and fixing up to-day, and I didn't make any. Couldn't we stop here?"

The doctor paused irresolutely, looking at the door and back at his daughter-in-law.

"I—we have always been accustomed—" he began, uncertainly; and then, as she has-

tened to place a chair for him by the light and brought forward the Bible, he turned to the proffered seat and said nothing more.

John's chief ascription of praise that night was not at all in the line of prayer.

"What a hand at managing she is!" he repeated more than once, with an inaudible chuckle. She certainly managed that matter very skillfully.

When the doctor turned his steps to the parlor the next morning, Rhoda had a convenient errand to the pantry, and so allowed him an opportunity to open the door and discover for himself that the room was both dark and cold. It could not be used in that condition. He glanced helplessly toward the curtains, and then at the blackened and empty grate. It was too dark clearly to discover either the nature or the extent of the changes; there was, at the moment, no one visible to answer any inquiries, and he again sought the corner he had occupied the previous evening. Mrs. John's errand detained her until he was fairly seated; and when she took her place and the boys came in from the barn, he was already in-

tent upon the chapter before him. A few repetitions of the experiment, with slight variations, established the new order, and he ceased to notice it.

Warren discontentedly viewed the loss of the room in which he had most frequently spent his evenings, and Reub muttered openly:

"I hope she won't take a notion to fix up any more, or we shall be driven out of the house."

It was a truer prophecy than many of his father's, and of a more nearly impending evil, but no one heeded. Mistress Rhoda smiled in good-natured serenity, and pretended not to hear as she bent over her sewing.

"I think things must have gone in a dreadfully slipshod way while Lucretia was here," she remarked to her husband one day.

"Oh, I don't know. Lucretia did pretty well," ventured John, mindful of his own ignorance in house-craft, but moved by a sense of justice and certain kindly memories of the absent. "She kept everything clean, and she was a good cook—"

"I don't mean that she wasn't neat," interrupted his wife, "or that she starved you, either: you'd all have found that out soon enough," with a laugh. "But things about the place haven't been made the most of. The butter and the eggs, now: I'm sure they can be made to bring in more than they have done. Though, of course, she'd no particular interest in things of that sort. She couldn't feel just as if they were her own. Well, I'm going to see what I can do," with a nod that expressed unbounded faith in her own ability. "Any way, I mean to make the most of everything."

But that common phrase means such different things to different people, and is altogether so contradictory and impossible a project when one begins seriously to analyze it! Making the most of the best things necessitates making very little of many other things.

Mrs. John, however, was troubled by no complicated meanings. She understood her own intentions.

"Do you like to go up to the Centre trading?" she asked of Unity one morning.

"Yes," answered Unity, brightly. It was a pleasant day to go anywhere, and she had a child's liking for seeing new things as well as for buying them.

"Well, then, you run out and tell John I want one of the horses and the light wagon, won't you? Or the old chaise, if he thinks his father won't want it. I forgot to say anything about it at breakfast. Be quick, and then we will go."

"What is it you want to do, Rhoda?" questioned John, coming within hailing-distance of the kitchen door when Unity had fulfilled her commission.

"I want to take some butter and eggs up to the Centre."

"Oh, if that's all, I'll be going up myself some time this afternoon, and I can take them. Lucretia often sent them that way."

"Yes, I'll warrant that was the way it was managed," laughed Rhoda. "As if I would trust you! That isn't all, either: I want to buy some things with the money I get, and you wouldn't know anything about muslins or calicoes, and would be sure to

bring home something I don't want. What's the matter? Can't you spare a horse?"

"Yes, I suppose I might," admitted John. "I'll bring it round directly;" and he walked off congratulating himself: "She's the one to make things go—the smartest little woman in this region."

Rhoda's keen black eyes ran over Unity's attire when she came down, and she quickly smoothed out a bow and straightened a fold or two.

"You'll do," she said.

Rhoda's taste was undoubtedly an improvement upon Lucretia's, but she swiftly assured herself "it couldn't matter really about a child's clothes. No one notices them, and, so long as she isn't old enough to know for herself, it does not seem worth while to put notions in her head that will only cost money."

The little girl cast some admiring glances upon her sister-in-law as they rode along the pleasant country road together. Her wardrobe was yet in all its bridal freshness, and Unity had a comfortable sense of being in some way connected with the pretty

dress and the new hat. What a brisk, confident independence there was about all Rhoda's ways and doings! And Unity was inclined to give confidence to any one who appeared self-confident.

Very assured and decided was Mrs. John's manner when they reached the store. She knew exactly what she wanted and what she meant to pay—or, rather, what she meant *not* to pay, which was the price asked. But Unity suddenly lost all her interest in shopping. Her cheeks burned, though she scarcely knew why, while Rhoda tested this fabric and picked flaws in that one, insisted upon a higher price for the butter and eggs, and that the delaines and muslins should be sold for a cent or two less per yard: she had bought them so elsewhere.

Unity walked away to the door. It seemed an interminable time before the trading was completed, but Rhoda came forth at last with a satisfied face and with her arms filled with bundles.

"What was there in the street that you wanted to watch so long?" she asked, when they were riding homeward.

"Why, I don't know. Nothing special." Unity hesitated a little over the answer. "I didn't like to stay in the store."

"I don't see why," commented Rhoda, rather wonderingly. "Children generally like to look at the goods; Sis and Dely always did. Besides, that is the way to learn how to trade. I thought there must have been something particularly interesting or you wouldn't have stood there looking out at the door so long. Well, I made some real good bargains, any way."

Which statement she repeated to John at dinner, relating the morning's occurrences and her own success—what was asked or offered for each article, what she said about it, and the price finally paid—while he listened and laughed; and even Reub seemed to enjoy the recital and declared she was "sharp."

"Yes, I rather think the butter and eggs brought in more to-day than they ever did before," assented Rhoda, complacently. "I don't know how Lucretia managed, to be sure, but Unity doesn't seem to have the least idea of such things. I'm afraid it

wouldn't do to send her alone, as we used sometimes to send Sis and Dely at home."

"Oh, I couldn't do it at all," acknowledged Unity, shrinking in dismay at the mere mention of such a commission.

"No, I don't think she'll ever be equal to that sort of thing," remarked Warren, so positively that Unity felt utterly humiliated and insignificant. But John cast a quick, questioning, scarcely-pleased glance at the speaker, as if somewhat doubtful of his meaning.

"Be sure you are right, and then go ahead" is a much-quoted maxim. Rhoda always went ahead, and apparently she had no misgivings about being right. In a short time her ambitious, energetic spirit, her busy, thrifty, bustling plans, had permeated all the farmhouse life and became manifest in countless ways. Yet, if she carried her points persistently, she did it for the most part good-naturedly. If she hurried others, she hurried herself also. She delighted in her own ability to "turn off work," as she phrased it, though Reub grumblingly averred that he "never had

seen any turned off yet: it was all taken in." She was not consciously selfish in her planning. "Whatever helps along the farm, and is good for John and me, is good for all, of course," she always reasoned, and so settled the matter satisfactorily to herself without entering into details which might have shown it in a somewhat different light. Whatever extra work she could induce the boys to do was so much clear gain. Besides, it must be good for them. What could be more valuable than habits of industry? And what could be better fitted to implant industrious habits in a boy than to keep him busy as constantly as possible? Her nature was not deep enough for self-distrust. It never occurred to her to doubt her own judgment or to question the wisdom of her own methods. At home she had always been taken at her own valuation. Her father was wont to remark, with a sagacious nod, "Oh, she's a smart one! What Rhody can't do ain't worth doing;" and she was of the same opinion. With all the many projects for her own aggrandizement—hers and John's—which she had brought to her new

home, she yet unmisgivingly believed that her coming was a boon and a blessing to everybody about the place.

So, in a thoroughly comfortable frame of mind, Rhoda devised and carried out many little schemes that were often aggravatingly transparent. When she saw Reub coming toward the house, and had reason to suspect that he was intent upon fishing-tackle or rabbit-traps, it was easy to hurry the cream into the churn, give it a few whisks with the dasher and be ready to say when he arrived,

"Oh, Reub, take care of this a few minutes, won't you? I want to go to the cellar."

Then, even though she busied herself with work down stairs until the churning was nearly done, Reub could scarcely have the ill-grace to leave it until she came; and if afterward he complained, she only laughed: the churning done, he might fret if he chose.

But after being entrapped a few times, Reub avoided the house when he heard the sound of the dasher.

"No, sir! She don't catch me that way

again," he muttered, stopping short and turning in another direction. "If she'd just ask me fair and square, so I could have a chance to say 'Yes' or 'No,' I'd do it—part of the time, anyhow; but I won't be wheedled into it any more."

When the evenings grew cooler, it frequently happened that no fire was found in any of the lower rooms except the kitchen. A large and tidy kitchen it was, but the position of table and lamps rendered it not altogether pleasant or convenient for the multiplicity of employments carried on there.

"We all have to crowd around this one table, and we can't half see," said the boys.

"If you can't see to read, you might see to help wind these carpet-rags," proposed Rhoda, cheerfully. "That's what John is going to do."

Another night she had several large baskets of apples suggestively at hand.

"If you boys are going to stay here, you might help us pare these apples," she said.

"I'm not going to stay here," answered Warren, taking up his hat with a suddenly-

formed determination to spend the evening at the Centre.

"I am, but I wanted to read," replied Reub, dolefully.

"You see," he explained to Warren, afterward, "when a fellow wants to do a thing, he wants to do it in peace, and not have somebody watching him all the time and thinking he ought to do something else."

Rhoda thought books were well enough in their place. She had never accurately determined what their place was, but she had a general opinion that they should not occupy any hours that could be used for work, school-books and school-hours excepted. These last must be duly allowed, of course, and should be attended to and done up as regularly as the weekly washing. But just reading—that was quite a different thing. She had wasted very little time in that way herself.

After which, it is scarcely necessary to state that Mistress Rhoda's knowledge of books was very limited. She had a certain respect for what she called "useful reading,"

using the term vaguely, with a dim idea of knowledge and dullness as combined in some weighty history or biography. She never attempted anything of that kind herself, except, perhaps, for a dreary half hour on Sunday, but she offset such deficiencies by pluming herself upon the virtue of "never reading trashy novels and tales." When, therefore, she one morning discovered that a book inadvertently left upon the table wore a paper cover, she lifted it suspiciously. It was decorated with a picture of a melancholy damsel with clasped hands and flowing hair, two Indians in full war-paint and feathers, and a "gallant hunter" just emerging from one of those secret caves which in this class of literature appear with such obliging frequency that one might suppose the whole country were an immense honeycomb.

Mistress Rhoda bestowed one glance upon this work of art, and immediately deposited the volume in the stove.

"There! that's the end of that," she said, in high disgust. "I won't have such trash in my house, not if I can help it. So much reading is bad enough, any way—doing noth-

ing but read a whole evening; but if they leave such stuff as that around where I can get hold of it, it won't last long."

Reub, inquiring for his book a little later, was wrathful when he learned its fate.

"It wasn't mine, any way: it was borrowed," he declared, indignantly.

"Well, it's no loss to any one," asserted Rhoda, calmly; "and if the owner won't lend you any more, so much the better. Such stuff as that! I should think you'd have been ashamed to ask what had become of it."

"Well, I wasn't; and you'd no right to touch it, either," said Reub, with a sufficient amount of justice on his side to make him feel quite as much abused as ashamed.

He scolded, and Rhoda laughed. What else should she do, since she was secure in the fact that all his talking could not restore the obnoxious volume? She did not attempt to argue with him upon the folly and the wrong of such reading. Indeed, she had no arguments to advance, but that left her perfectly untrammeled in her denunciation. It was trash because all such books were

trash. "How did she know?" Why, because she did. "Had she ever read any?" No, indeed she hadn't! and she never wanted to. It was no use talking; she considered it her duty to burn everything of the kind that she found, and she would do it. That was the sum and the substance of her answers; and Reub was at last obliged, sullenly enough, to abandon the topic and accept as best he could the loss of the book.

Rhoda congratulated herself upon her success in the transaction. Her zeal in this one direction was intense in proportion to its narrowness and ignorance. How much of it originated in any real desire to prevent injury and wrong, and how much in a mere obstinate pride of carrying out her own opinions, she did not inquire. She was not accustomed to mental or moral analysis, and she believed in nothing so strongly as herself.

"People talk of the evils of such reading," she soliloquized. "What do they have it for? If they were like me, they just wouldn't have it around—that's all;" and she really felt competent, this half-edu-

cated young woman of twenty years, to set right most of the evils in the universe. Did not she and all her father's house know that what Rhoda could not do was not worth doing?

If Reub brought any more books of the kind to the kitchen for reading, he did not bring them openly and was careful to carry them away with him when he left the room.

The occurrence had been nearly forgotten—by Rhoda, at least—until a few weeks later, when, on a sweeping and dusting tour through the house, she found in the chamber occupied by the boys a number of the same paper-covered volumes piled upon a little stand. She did not stop to sift the wheat from the chaff—there were a few grains of wheat—but, without a moment's hesitation, condemned the whole to the fire.

"I told Reub what I'd do with every one I found, and he may keep them out of the way if he don't want them burned," she said, in answer to Unity's exclamation of dismay.

But this time it was Warren who de-

manded an account of them, and in his dark eyes there was a look that made it more difficult to explain to him than it had been to brave Reub's boyish temper. Even upon Rhoda's comprehension it dawned that Warren was not a little boy. She laughed uneasily, and flushed over her recital.

"Then you mean to say that you went into my room, hunted over my books that were lying there disturbing no one, and concluded to burn them?"

"Pshaw! Such stuff, Warren! It ought to be burned, every bit of it."

Warren declined to discuss the value of the books, but very decidedly intimated that she was carrying her oversight and management too far.

"Well, but it was such trash! Everybody calls it trash, and you and Reub oughtn't to read it," she began, lamely enough; and then, vexed at her own confusion, she took refuge in defiance: "Besides, I don't like it, and I won't have it in my house; I've always said I wouldn't."

"And how long have you owned this house, Mrs. Dodge?" Warren asked.

This hot anger was very different from Reub's outburst of passion, and it did not die down so easily. Rhoda secretly wished she had not provoked it, and John heartily agreed with her before the day was over. He found himself in an unpleasant position between his desire to uphold his wife's views and doings and his dread of irritating Warren any farther. He would gladly have avoided taking any part in the matter, but that was impossible.

"Rhoda meant no harm, Warren," he urged, trying to conciliate without abandoning the ground she had taken. "She doesn't believe in that kind of books; she has been brought up that way, you see, and—"

"And she has a right to think exactly what she pleases about them," interrupted Warren, sharply. "But she has no right whatever to burn a book, or anything else, that doesn't belong to her. I'll read when and what I like."

"Oh, well— See here, Warren." John

shifted his feet uneasily. "Nobody is saying anything against your reading—only such stuff, you know. There are plenty of good-enough books about the house, if you want to read, without bringing in these. There's father's library—"

"Father's books!" Warren's sneer was undisguised. "If my reading isn't as useful as his, I'll own it's been pretty poor."

"You know very well what I mean." John made that assertion the more positively because he did not himself very clearly understand what he did mean. "Those stories are all stuff and nonsense. Any way, Rhoda doesn't think they're right, and she doesn't want them in her house."

"It isn't her house, nor yours, either, John: you'd best remember that before you go too far. And my room especially isn't her house, and I mean to have an end of all such meddling there."

"Well, I'll let it alone after this, but you may not find it very comfortable," said Rhoda, with flaming cheeks and snapping eyes. Her usual good-nature had vanished.

"I'll risk that.—You know how to make a bed and fix the room, don't you?" He turned abruptly to Unity.

"I? Yes." The girl hesitated, looking from one to the other and uncertain what reply she ought to make.

"You take care of it, then, won't you? If the pillows are a little crooked now and then, they will do; and other things will not be meddled with, as you happen to be a Dodge—and honest."

"Take care, Warren!" exclaimed John. "Don't go too far."

"Take care yourself," retorted Warren; and for an instant the brothers looked in each other's eyes with a glare not good to see. Then Warren turned away with an unpleasant laugh and John went out. There was nothing more said about it, yet a breach had been made that widened from that day.

Very soon it would have seemed to an ordinary observer—to one like Rhoda—that everything was going on as before. For a short time she persisted in her determination to have nothing to do with the boys' room,

but she was too well satisfied with herself to be easily offended; her housewifely tendencies were strong, and she speedily took charge of the apartment once more. She did not disturb the books, however, even when, as rarely happened, she saw them lying on the stand, and they were never brought down stairs again. The boys read in their own room when they read in the house at all; and when the weather grew colder and the fireless room was uncomfortable, they dropped into a habit of going up to the Centre to spend their evenings. Warren was the first to go, and Reub soon accompanied him.

Of course they were welcome to stay at home if they chose, but Rhoda did rather enjoy having the kitchen to herself and John with no other encumbrance than Unity. She sewed and knitted contentedly, pleased with her own industry and sure that she was fulfilling her woman's mission as well as any one could. When she remembered her crusade against pernicious literature, she comforted herself with the thought that she had taken such

a stand that at least none of it would ever be left lying around the house where it could be seen. She had done as well as she could.

As for Dr. Dodge, he was busy that winter trying to locate the plain of Armageddon: where his boys were located he did not know.

CHAPTER V.

"TOM'S BOY."

DO these chapters appear but a recital of trifles? The days of common lives seem made up of such, scarcely worth the telling. One week is monotonously like another. We sleep and rise, night and day, and meanwhile the little seeds of good and evil, sown with careless or unconscious hand, spring up and grow—we know not how until we are surprised by the harvest. The days and the months come and go, seeming to bring but little that is new; it is only as we look back over the years that we see the wonderful changes which have been slowly wrought.

The months at the farmhouse passed uneventfully enough. The different seasons brought their differing work: that was all. The place was undoubtedly prospering. Barns, outbuildings, fences, all told of increasing care, thrift and order, and the fields

were yielding as never before. The fresh start the old place had taken and the rapidity with which it was "building up" were subjects of common remark. The neighbors observed to one another, "What a good thing it was that John married as he did, settled down there, and took the farm into his own hands!" adding occasionally, with a shake of the head, "Pity the younger boys are not so steady. Rather wild, those two; hanging around stores and the bar-room up at the Centre House too much for any good, they say."

"They say" always tells such stories long before they reach the ears of those most concerned, but some whispers had once or twice penetrated even to Dr. Dodge's study and disturbed for a little while his calculations. Perhaps it was because of them that he began to go to the town himself sometimes when he had errands, instead of sending, as he had formerly done.

Returning from one of these trips one evening, he paused in the kitchen instead of going directly to his room, and drew a letter from his pocket:

"Here is something that came to-day, and I want to speak about it before I forget it." That was certainly a necessary precaution, though any letters that concerned the family were so rare that both Unity and Rhoda looked up curiously. "It is from Tom—my brother Tom—and he writes that his—one of his children— Let me see." The doctor straightened his spectacles and fumbled over the pages. "Oh yes! his boy. I was thinking it was a boy."

"What about him?" asked Rhoda, after he had refolded the sheet and neglected to give any further information.

"Oh, he wants to send him here to stay a while. He isn't very strong—been sick or something of the sort—and they think the country air will do him good. I suppose," said the doctor, arousing to momentary combativeness and scorn, "that the fine fashion and style and humbug they live in have turned out as I always told Tom they would. The youngster has probably been coddled and trammeled and trained until there is no strength left in him, and now they want to send him back to natural life to recuperate.

Folly! However, he's Tom's boy, and he must come. There's no need of getting ready for him; let him take us as he finds us. Best thing for him. But I must answer this and tell Tom to send him, and I wish one of you would remind me of it in the morning: I may not remember."

"If he should happen to forget it entirely, it wouldn't cause me any great mourning," said Rhoda, half laughing, though she looked annoyed, when he had left the room. "It will be a great bother to have a sick boy around."

But Unity silently resolved that her father should not be allowed to forget, and that she would attend to the sending of the letter. She had often thought of these relatives whom she had never seen and of whom she seldom heard, wondering what they were like and whether, if she knew them, they would seem really near to her. Rhoda's sisters, Dely and Sis, were frequent visitors, and Rhoda, always glad to have them there, often explained, among her other reasons, that they were "such company for Unity." But they were not: contiguity could not

make companionship. They were constantly together, but Unity whispered to herself, "It only makes me feel lonesome." She did not know why; she often looked at them wistfully and wondered. But they could not have explained a fact of the existence of which they were unconscious. They were "smart and capable" in Rhoda's fashion; they abounded in physical strength and life; they liked hurry and bustle and could crowd a good deal of hard work into a short time; they knew all about "log-cabin," "star" and other quilts, and had each pieced half a dozen or more; and they were "good at managing," that indefinite phrase covering a great many things; so they were frequently held up to Unity as examples, and she sometimes tried to emulate them, but never very successfully. She always felt relieved when one of their visits ended and her little upper room was left to her own undisturbed possession.

But these unknown cousins might be different. The girl found her thoughts straying to them through the door this letter had opened, and away from her school-

books many times that evening. Yet the school-books were usually very interesting. In the three years since Rhoda came she had advanced from the little frame school-house to the Centre school, rising rapidly as her thirst for knowledge, once awakened, grew more eager.

"I wonder when he'll come?" she said, suddenly, late in the evening.

"Who?" asked Rhoda, looking up from her mending; but when reminded, she laughed carelessly: "Oh! I had forgotten him. I wish everybody else would, and then there'd be an end of all the bother. I don't know when he'll come, I'm sure; any time will be too soon."

That was perhaps the general sentiment, though not generally expressed. John manifested very little interest in the subject, Warren none, and Reub only sneered—he was fast acquiring a habit of sneering at most things—and averred that "the city fellow" would not trouble him much, because he would not be troubled by him.

Unity was the only one who cared enough to be even curious; so it happened naturally,

though unexpectedly to her, that when Lester Dodge arrived he chiefly sought her companionship. He was but little older than she—a bright, merry, somewhat spoiled boy, exceedingly fond of his own way, but with a winsome, coaxing fashion of taking it that half veiled from himself and others his selfishness in that direction.

The first day of his visit Unity was startled by his voice outside the window at which she was sitting:

"What are you doing in there?"

"Shelling peas," she answered, recovering from her momentary surprise.

"Well, can't you shell them out here under the trees? I don't want to go in there, and I want to talk to you. Come! I'll help you do them—if I can't coax you out in any other way. You see," he explained, when Unity and her basket were comfortably established on the grass, "I couldn't keep up with those fellows out in the field. I tried it a little while, but it was too hard work; and, besides, they didn't want me."

"Why, they are real busy," began Unity,

flushing and trying to soften what she knew to be the truth.

"Oh, you needn't take the trouble to apologize," laughed Lester, leaning back against a tree and lazily breaking open the green pods from the basket; "I don't mind it in the least. I didn't want them, either. I supposed I was expected to tramp around through the fields, talk about crops I don't know anything about, and admire the pigs and cattle; and I wanted to do my duty, that was all. If they are willing to dispense with my company, I'm more than willing to be excused. But I want somebody to talk to." He waited a moment, and then mischievously questioned: "Well? Why don't you talk to me?"

"I don't know what to say," answered Unity, shyly but honestly. This was a new type of boyhood to her—as unlike Warren and Reub as possible, though she had never felt very well acquainted with them.

"That's a funny reason. I thought girls could talk straight ahead even when they hadn't anything to say. They do in town, any way. Do you like to live out here?"

"Why, I don't know." Unity began to ponder the question; she had never thought of living anywhere else.

"Well, I shouldn't," said Master Lester, promptly. "It's a nice place to come to, but I shouldn't want to stay in it all the time. Wait a minute, and I'll tell you why." Then he began to describe his own life at home, and Unity, losing her shyness, was soon busily asking questions about her aunt and cousins and listening with brightening eyes to descriptions of their appearance, home and friends, and to accounts of scenes and places new to her.

Lester liked to hear himself talk at any time, and there was additional pleasure in it with this eager listener, who seemed to find freshness and novelty in even such commonplace topics. Moreover, he liked her, as he had at once declared to himself in his impulsive fashion; and so he spared no pains minutely to answer her inquiries and picture for her the Park and the city, with its stores, its churches and its amusements.

Mistress Rhoda found the process a long one.

"Unity, haven't you finished those peas yet?" she called.

"Yes'm; 'most done," Lester answered, promptly, before his companion could reply. "They wouldn't have been if I hadn't helped."

"I don't know about that," answered Rhoda, doubtfully; but she withdrew her head from the window and waited.

"What makes them call you 'Unity'?" Lester demanded as soon as Rhoda had vanished.

It was the old question, and Unity flushed. She had grown painfully sensitive about her name; nevertheless, she gave the accustomed explanation—her dying mother's words.

"Well, I think they might have turned them to better account, and not have tried very hard, either," commented Lester, with a swift mental review of some family habits which his boyish eyes had been quick to discover. "'Unity'! It's too long and solemn a name—too old-fashioned. Make them call you 'Una.'"

The girl looked up with a smile, but she shook her head:

"That is pretty; I never thought of that. But nobody will call me so."

"I shall. Yes, and the others will too, after a while, if anybody begins it. Of course you can't expect them to change all at once. Now I've told you about my home, I want you to show me about yours. Can't we go to the woods this afternoon and find some ferns? Flo wanted me to get some and press them for her."

"Oh, I'd like to. There are plenty of them. I don't know whether I can go to-day—" She hesitated.

"Why not?"

He had gathered up basket and dish, and was following her into the house. The moment they entered he appealed to Rhoda:

"Can't Una go with me to the woods this afternoon? I want her to show me where to find some ferns."

"Who?" asked Rhoda.

"My cousin, Una. I'm going to drop the 't-y, ty;' I don't like it."

"I do," said Rhoda, shortly.

"Do you?" He looked up with dancing eyes, but a sober face. "Well, then, Cousin

Rhodaty, why can't we go to the woods? I thought this was vacation."

Rhoda laughed, though half vexed. She had various plans of work for the afternoon. Still, it was Unity's vacation, as he said, though that had never made much difference in freedom or pleasure-seeking. But, since the boy had been keen enough to notice and speak of it, she did not want him "telling any queer stories when he went home."

Rhoda was scarcely conscious of her own motive in answering:

"Why, yes, I suppose she can go, if she wants to, as soon as the dinner is out of the way."

Unity's glance of surprise and pleasure vexed Rhoda again: it seemed to say that her reply had been unexpected. In truth, she had not really intended to be harsh or unkind to the girl, but "the work" was her pet idol, and, so long as Unity did not insist upon holidays, she reasoned, when she thought of it at all, that it was a pity to suggest them, and so waste time that might be used in housework or sewing. There was likely to be a change, however, with Lester Dodge

there. She hoped, rather spitefully, that he would make his visit short.

Unity did not share the wish. That afternoon was one of the happiest of her life. They wandered through the woods laughing and singing, she occasionally astonished at her own merriment, but finding his spirits infectious. He admired and enjoyed her favorite nooks; he told her wonderful stories from books he had read and described his schools and his studies. She had desired his visit only as a means of gratifying her curiosity concerning her unknown relatives; she had not expected much of his society or anticipated any great pleasure from his companionship; but he brought a world of new musings, purposes and ambitions into her life. His thoughts, indeed, were shallower than hers; so far there had been nothing in his experience to awaken depth or earnestness. The information and the acquirements which she deemed so wonderful were but the result of his daily surroundings, and were superficial enough at best; while his easy manner and fluent tongue betrayed the petting and indulgence of the

home that had always given his wishes and opinions rather more than due weight. But her admiration was very natural. He was more nearly brotherly than any brother she had ever known; he was neither supercilious nor boastful of superior advantages, and he was sunny-tempered, quick of apprehension and ready to understand her fancies and feelings even though they had never been his own. She reveled in the new, rare pleasure, and her cousinly affection grew strong.

"It seems strange, when we are own cousins, that we never saw or knew anything of each other until two weeks ago," she said.

"Well, why didn't you write or do something to find out about us if you wanted to know?" he questioned. "Now, to tell the honest truth, I never thought anything about any of you here until father wanted me to come. I believe you have always stood still and taken things just as they came to you, without ever trying to make them different or better. That's no way to do, Una Dodge. But I mean to keep up the acquaintance

now, I can tell you. I'll have Flo out here to see you another summer—if she doesn't come before then—and you shall come and make us a long visit, too."

Unity only smiled; she had little faith in any such brilliant plans, but she meant to make the most of the present.

If he thought her yielding to existing circumstances entirely too tame, Lester certainly managed matters in a very different fashion while he was there, and daringly flattered, coaxed or bribed Rhoda into compliance in a way that was bewildering, and that would have been impossible had she suspected him of really plotting against any of her plans or her theories. Wherever he wanted to go he went, and where he went he usually contrived to take Unity. So they rowed on the river, picked berries in the meadow and climbed to the top of Monoteg Hill.

"Bring your sewing out here, Una, and I'll read you a story while you work," he called from the shady old porch.

"I don't know as I approve of reading stories," said Rhoda, a trifle sharply.

"You don't?" Lester leaned his arms on the window-sill and looked in at her. "Well, if Una and I must wait for you to decide, I think you ought to do it pretty soon. Come out here and listen to one of them, and then you can tell better whether you like it or not. Besides, I want a chance to coax you to make a berry shortcake for supper. I never tasted any like yours, Cousin Rhoda; I am hungry whenever I think of them. Is this the chair you want? I'll carry it out for you." He sprang through the window and audaciously marched off with chair and work-basket, and Rhoda followed, under the impression that he had understood her to consent.

"There are so many kinds of stories! Of course you couldn't like a good many of them," Lester resumed, with his book open upon his knee. "But my mother is particular enough—a little too particular, I think—and she says this magazine is the best one she ever saw for young people." Then he plunged into his reading without allowing opportunity for further comment.

Rhoda did not listen long. She was not

imaginative or literary, and the narrative did not attract her. Her thoughts soon wandered to more interesting matters, and she heard little beyond an occasional sentence and the continuous murmur of the reader's voice. Having thus neglected her office as censor, what could she do but assent when he looked up at the close of the story and remarked,

"There, Cousin Rhoda! Don't you say there is a good deal of solid history in that?"

Rhoda knew very little of history, solid or otherwise, but she reflected that there were no wild Indians on the cover of the book, and the boy's mother had been cited as approving it; and, moreover, Unity could go on with her work, which made that style of recreation more economical than wandering about through the fields and the woods. In any case, she did not want herself to be pressed into further listening to anything so stupid; so she offered no more objections, and the reading went on day after day, to Unity's great delight. She had read what books she could find in her father's library

—not many to please a girl of her age, for she still shrank from all commentaries on the sacred writers, and from everything that looked as if it might be in any way connected with them. But such sketches and books as Lester brought were new.

"You shall have this magazine all the year, Una," he promised; "I can mail it to you when our folks get through with it."

So, in countless, trifling ways, unconsciously to himself and to her, Lester changed the tenor of Unity's life. He was chiefly planning a good time for himself while he stayed, and incidentally a better time for her out of what he could very easily bestow, because in his impulsive, warm-hearted way he liked her. His persistent changing of her name met one very unexpected ally. Warren looked up when he first heard it—at the dinner-table one day—glanced from one to the other, and after a moment volunteered the remark, "I think that is an improvement." Afterward, when he addressed her—and such occasions were so rare that it almost seemed as if he had made this one—he also called her "Una."

"Warren is getting new-fangled," sneered Reuben.

"I think a few new-fangled ways in some directions wouldn't hurt any of us," answered Warren, slowly and with a meaning look in his dark eyes that made Reub's suddenly drop to his plate.

It appeared to Unity that of late Warren's eyes often had a new expression in them—one they had never worn before—and that she occasionally found them resting upon her with a serious, thoughtful look that she could not comprehend. At such times it almost seemed as if Warren were not so far away from her as she had always supposed, if only they knew how to make each other's acquaintance. Perhaps she noticed and thought of it more because the strangeness of their relation had been revealed more clearly by Lester's talk of his sister and a letter from her which he had shown. That letter especially had been a revelation to Unity. In all her life she had received but two letters—brief, queerly-spelled epistles from Lucretia—and it might have been the half-envious longing in her eyes that made

Lester one day toss into her lap the dainty, closely-written sheet he had just perused:

"You may read it if you like. It's from Flo."

Very kind in tone it was, full of little items of home life and doings and expressing sisterly interest in all his pursuits. It abounded in good advice also, and admonitions which were a trifle stilted and self-complacent. But Unity did not notice that. She only thought it beautiful, and wondered how Flora could write it. She could not fancy herself daring to write to Warren or Reub in that way.

"How good she must be!" she commented, admiringly.

Lester screwed his face into an odd grimace:

"Oh, Flo always writes a sermon and takes me for her wicked congregation. She thinks it's her duty to put all that in, but generally I skip it." Then, as he saw Unity's face, he laughed carelessly: "You needn't look shocked. Flo and I are fond of each other, you understand, but she is so dreadfully good that it's enough for one family

without my undertaking anything in the same line. By the way, she would be giving you some lessons about keeping watch over your brothers if she were here. Does Reub always insist upon walking on the roof at night?"

"Reub? What do you mean?"

Unity dropped the letter, but Lester deftly caught it and replaced it in its envelope as he replied:

"Nothing, only I've seen somebody on the porch-roof two nights, and each time it proved to be Reub creeping along in his stocking-feet. I know it was Reub, though I did not speak and he did not see me. It's a funny place for a midnight promenade."

But Unity did not smile. She suspected that Reub had found a way of evading his father's late command—which the doctor had attempted to enforce with more vigilance than for years he had bestowed upon any household arrangement—that the boy's visits to the Centre and his remaining away from home until a late hour of the night should cease. In her newly-awakening sense of sisterly responsibility, Unity wondered whether, if she had

known and thought of these things earlier, it would have made any difference. If she had been like Flora, she questioned, with a vague feeling of trouble, would Warren and Reub have been different?

CHAPTER VI.

SWEPT AWAY.

AS the weeks passed on and Lester went home, so that her life dropped more nearly into its old channel, Unity grew increasingly anxious concerning Reub. It might have been partly her clearer vision, but she saw many things unnoticed before; and Reub certainly grew more discontented, willful and unmanageable. The change in Warren was more subtle and undefinable. Whatever path he was traveling, it seemed no longer to be Reub's. His sister wondered at him often, but her fears were for the younger brother. Very vague they were. Her fourteen years of life had brought her little knowledge of the world or of human nature, and she scarcely knew what she feared, or why. Once, when she was standing in a store in the village, Reub

had passed the open door, and she overheard one man say to another,

"That boy is going to the dogs about as fast as he can manage it."

Unity pondered the remark during all her homeward walk; it haunted her at night and finally prompted her to something she rarely did: she asked Rhoda's interpretation of its meaning.

But Rhoda answered half impatiently:

"I'm sure I don't know. He torments John nearly to death with the way he shirks the work, and only half does what little he pretends to do. I think his father ought to put a stop to it. See there, Unity! You are sewing that sleeve in wrong-side up."

Rhoda used her mouth as a receptacle for pins for a minute or two while she altered the pattern she was fastening upon a piece of cloth; and when her organs of speech were once more free, she added:

"Well, nobody can say I haven't done my duty by him and all the rest since I came here; and if Reub goes to destruction, he has nobody but himself to thank for it:

that's one comfort." It did not appear particularly comforting to Reub's sister, but she said nothing more.

John's complaints, indeed, grew incessant. Reub would not do this, Reub neglected that. He could not trust the worthless fellow to attend to anything, and he did not believe in working himself to death to keep up such laziness. Reub would have to change if he stayed there much longer. All this, chiefly at Rhoda's suggestion, was frequently poured into the doctor's ears, and that preoccupied gentleman had bestowed upon the matter more attention than anything outside of his study had won from him within Unity's recollection. But all his sharp denunciations and strenuous prohibitions—the more sharp and the more strenuous because of his annoyance at being so constantly forced to consider a subject that interfered with his studies—all John's bitter faultfinding and half threats, only seemed to chafe and irritate Reub, rendering him more determined to pursue his own course so far as it was in his power to do so.

"And now my young gentleman has decided to stay in bed and let me get through the morning work without any of his help," said John, one misty morning, as he arose from the table. "I called him twice without any answer before I went out to the barn, and now he isn't even down for breakfast. I suppose he will be along by eight or nine o'clock and want something specially nice."

"It's very little he will find, then," said Rhoda, shortly, beginning to clear the table after the early meal.

"I suppose he was on some spree last night until nobody knows what time, and so he is making up for it by lying in bed this morning," pursued John.—"Was he, father?"

The doctor had been absently matching his knife and fork together as if they were two parts of a difficult problem. He dropped them at the question—to the great relief of Rhoda, who immediately bore them away with the other utensils—and looked up in bewilderment:

"'Sleep'? What did you say, John?"

"I asked you if Reub came in late last night."

"I—I don't remember." Dr. Dodge rubbed his head as if to awaken his recollection. "I don't believe I saw him last night. In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if I forgot to lock the door at all. I was very busily occupied in trying to reach the exact meaning of the word commonly rendered 'Apollyon.' If a new meaning can be given to that—which I think is very possible—it will alter the whole sentence. It is a very interesting question—very." Then, slowly arousing to an inspection of the face opposite him, he was recalled to a remembrance of the original question, and observed hastily, as he arose from his seat, "But about the boy. Such doings really must be stopped. Where did you say he stayed so very late last night, John?"

"I don't *know* anything about it; I only supposed he had been off somewhere because he is in bed so late this morning—though perhaps he has concluded that lying in bed is the only part of farm-work that suits him," answered John, not feeling in a mood

to be particularly respectful toward his father, to say nothing of entertaining any charity for Reub.

The old doctor sighed. This world, when he did return to it, was not a very pleasant place to him. He turned to Unity:

"When Reuben comes down, tell him that I want to see him."

But Reub did not come, and John, tiring at last of doing without him, went again to the foot of the stairs with a sharper summons.

"I don't believe he is sleeping to any such extent as that," said John, mounting the stairs with quick, angry strides.

He came down in a minute or two more slowly and with a puzzled look:

"He is not there."

"Slipped off to get his breakfast somewhere else, or to go without it for the sake of shirking the work," commented Rhoda.

"No; he has not been there—at least, the bed does not look as if it had been slept in last night," answered John.

"I wish I had the managing of him for a while," said his wife, with a significant

nod of her head which seemed to imply that Reub would either be reformed or be crushed in an exceedingly brief period.

"I think you have managed already—considerably," observed Warren.

The remark irritated John, as Warren's slow, cool remarks often did even when he scarcely comprehended them. He turned upon his brother and demanded gruffly:

"Where is Reub?"

"It might be as well to ask first whether I know," suggested Warren. "It happens that I don't."

But when the dinner-hour arrived and Reub had not appeared, Warren was again appealed to for information, this time by his father, though the doctor might have forgotten the boy's absence at breakfast if the others had not alluded to it.

"He said something about going out on the river to fish a little while before dark. That was just after supper last evening; I haven't seen him since," said Warren.

For once, Dr. Dodge was fairly aroused. He pushed back his chair and stared at Warren in surprise and alarm:

"Went out on the river last night and not come back yet! What in the world possessed you, Warren, that you did not tell this sooner? Why, he may be— Some accident may have happened."

"Not much danger of *his* being drowned," said Rhoda, giving the personal pronoun an emphasis which made the remark as near an approach as she dared venture, in the presence of her father-in-law, to a quotation of the old proverb.

No one answered her, and even John looked slightly troubled, though after a minute or two he said,

"Oh, I expect he's safe enough. He probably went somewhere else." He spoke to his father, but the doctor had speedily put on his hat, and, instead of going back to his study, had gone out for the purpose of making inquiries.

But at the end of the lane the old gentleman was met by a boy coming toward the house:

"Is Reub at home? I came to ask him if this is his hat. We found it in a boat that had floated down against Stony Point,

Is this Reub's hat? Page 134.

and I thought maybe he left it when he was out fishing."

"Did you see him when he was going out last night?" demanded the doctor. "He hasn't come home yet."

"Has—n't!" The boy uttered only the one word, but the tone of his voice was full of consternation.

"I don't know whether this is his hat," began the doctor, fumbling the article nervously.

"I know it is," interposed the boy, decidedly; "but I didn't think he was—"

John, Rhoda and Unity also identified the hat the moment they saw it, and immediately the old farmhouse was in a state of excitement. Inquiries soon disclosed the fact that Reub had not been seen in the village the previous evening, and his disappearance, together with the drifting boat and the hat, could suggest but one conclusion. People looked in the father's face and said nothing—a silence that said everything. Warm-hearted neighborliness flamed into life at once. Women came to the house with offers of assistance where none was

needed, and men were soon busy searching along the shore and out on the river.

It was strange how suddenly all the irritation and annoyance caused by the boy's faults and follies sank into nothingness. John spoke with lowered tone of "poor Reub!" and Rhoda took one of his numerous fancies in fishing-tackle down from a nail where always before it had vexed her to find it, and laid it away with a quiet gentleness that was almost tenderness.

The water was dragged and searched in vain; the long day wore slowly away without bringing tidings. For once the doctor's study was deserted and books and papers were neglected. The farm that had so needed Reub's help in the morning was left without John's all day while he lingered among the groups on the river. At the house Rhoda and Unity started at every step that neared the door, but no one brought the message for which they looked—or for which Rhoda looked, for Unity scarcely expected the search to be successful. She could not have explained to herself why she did not fully share the

horrible dread of the others. Her heart was heavy with a burden of impending evil, but she could not feel that the river held the key to the secret.

It might have been Warren's face, to which his sister's eyes were constantly drawn, that suggested her disbelief in the theories so generally adopted. He had joined the others in the search, but he said nothing. He had expressed no opinion, offered no suggestion, all the day; but Unity fancied his grave face and manner were perplexed rather than expectant. Just at sunset he was standing on the porch, when a man came up, paused a moment with a pitying glance from brother to sister and said hesitatingly,

"We have found nothing yet. Most likely the— Likely it's been carried down the river, or else been caught and held by something under the water. We won't give up looking, though."

As he passed on, Unity looked up at Warren.

"You do not believe Reub is drowned?" she said, in a low tone. Only the excite-

ment of the hour had prompted the remark. She was so unused to seeking Warren's confidence on any subject that she wondered at herself the next minute.

But Warren answered quietly enough, as if unnoticing the strangeness of the question:

"No. I don't know anything about it, though, but I can't feel that he's there. He has said so many things lately about going off somewhere—that he wouldn't stay here with John ordering about and Rhoda acting as if she owned everything; that he was sick of farm-life, any way; and things of that sort. His staying away all night didn't frighten me: it isn't the first time he's done that, by a good many, though I suppose the rest didn't know it. I've tried to stop it, but I couldn't. Reub has been pretty wild lately. I've expected that he'd go off somewhere before long. He's so used to the water it don't seem as if anything would have been likely to happen to him there. Still, I can't understand about the boat and the hat. Reub wouldn't have set them adrift for the sake of making father

and all of them think what they do; he wouldn't have done so cruel a thing as that. I don't know anything about it: that's all I can tell you."

Unity had half hoped that Warren knew something more, but even in the midst of her anxiety she felt a little thrill of pleasure that he had answered her so fully and frankly. There was nothing more to be learned; she could only wait.

Presently, Warren went away again; the long evening wore on, and Rhoda and Unity sat by the fire, talking but little and listening to every sound that might be made by an approaching step.

"There will be a great deal of extra expense," said Rhoda, rousing from a long reverie. "We shall have to plan for that—mourning, and everything."

Unity shuddered.

"He isn't—found yet," she urged.

"That won't make any difference about our wearing mourning; we'll have to do that just the same as soon as we are sure he can't be found. And there will be other things, too," Rhoda answered, reflectively,

then added, with a half sigh and in a lower tone, "Poor Reub! It's queer to be talking of him in this way."

The next day passed as the first had done. All effort was unavailing, and at last was reluctantly abandoned. There remained, kindly voices whispered to one another, but the possibility that the body might yet be washed ashore at some point far down the river. Even that faint hope died out when a week had dragged slowly by and brought no tidings. Then one day a report—circulated no one quite knew how or by whom—reached the farmhouse that a man just returned from a neighboring city had laughed when he heard, among other items of local news, of this sad event that had occurred during his absence. He declared that Reuben Dodge was not drowned, for he had seen him alive and well with a circus company.

"I don't believe it," said Rhoda, promptly. She was beginning to grow accustomed to the thought that Reub was drowned, and she did not like theories that upset her established order of doing and thinking.

Besides, though she had told no one of the purchase, she had already bought material for black dresses for herself and Unity, arguing that it was "better to be in season, instead of waiting till things must be had in a rush, and then, maybe, have to pay double price for them." Rhoda always found it difficult to believe that any providing of hers could turn out to be undue haste.

"The man has probably seen somebody that looked like Reub," suggested John.

A sudden light of intelligence flashed into Warren's face, however, and after a moment he said slowly, glancing at his father,

"There was a circus up the river that night, I remember—up at Waynesdale."

"I shall soon know," said the doctor, with a peculiar rigid look about his lips, as if some stern determination were graving its lines there, and he left the house and walked out toward the stable. A few minutes later Unity saw him lead his horse down the walk, mount and ride away.

The whole story of that afternoon—how he traced the rumor, found the man and the entire conversation that ensued—Dr. Dodge

never told. He came back just at nightfall, and entered the old kitchen with a slow step when they were all gathered there.

"Well?" questioned Rhoda, with as near an approach to impatience as she ever ventured upon with this father-in-law of whom, notwithstanding her scorn of all his vagaries, she yet stood slightly in awe.

The doctor turned and faced the group.

"It is true," he said, with almost painful distinctness and deliberateness, as if he were repeating some carefully-prepared formula; "he is living. Mr. Nelson saw him and spoke with him; so there can be no mistake. Reuben told him he had found something he liked better than farm-work—a low, worthless life among a set of vile, miserable rope-dancers and jugglers. He is no son of mine. He has no home here after this, and no part or lot in anything that belongs to me. I never want to hear his name again;" and the doctor took his lamp and went up to his solitary study. All his education and prejudices, his contempt for shams and frivolities, his family pride, combined to make the boy's course the most obnoxious that could have

been chosen. The father's bitter wrath and mortification seemed greater than his grief.

"Well, that's the end of that," said Rhoda, drawing a long breath, as the measured step died away upon the stairs and the faint sound of the closing door reached them from the room above.

But it was not the end of it, for a few days later there arrived for Dr. Dodge a letter which all were sure was from Reub. Rhoda ventured to express her opinion to that effect as she handed him the missive when he came down to dinner.

"If it is, it concerns no one but myself, and I shall know what to do with it," answered the doctor, with grim quietness, glancing hurriedly over the two pages that displayed chiefly Reub's lack of scholarship, and then tossed the sheet into the fire.

"One thing I want to know, father," interposed Warren, quietly: "does he know what we—what you—first thought had happened? If he had meant to deceive us in any such way, I do not see why he should have written now."

The doctor hesitated a moment, as if un-

certain whether to vouchsafe any reply, but finally answered:

"He says that he rowed up to Waynesdale for the purpose of attending that mummery show—circus or whatever they are pleased to call it—and of joining it if he had a chance and liked it.—Liked it!" the doctor repeated, with scornful emphasis.—"He says that when he attempted to fasten his boat the rope broke and slipped from his hand, and while he was trying to regain it his hat blew off and he lost hat and boat together. He writes that he had just heard that we feared he was drowned, and so sent the letter to relieve our minds. As if it could be any relief to know that he has sunk to such a life as that! I shall write just so much of an answer as will prevent his sending any more letters or ever claiming any relationship here again. And now never ask me any more questions about him; never bring me any word of him, whatever happens. As I said before, I never want to hear his name again."

"He is right enough, too," declared Rhoda as the doctor disappeared. If chagrin at the

thought of those needlessly purchased dresses and a flitting reflection that, with Reub cut off from the property, there would be the more to divide among the other children, had anything to do with her prompt sanction of her father-in-law's wrath, she did not know it. She thought she was shocked at the course the boy had chosen and indignant at his treatment of his friends; but wounded vanity and selfishness lie at the root of much that we dignify as righteous indignation.

While they believed the boy dead they had called in the aid of neighbors and friends, searched the river up and down and dragged the sands beneath the water in the mere hope of regaining the lifeless body, but Reuben living, drifting out on a tide that they believed dangerous to both body and soul, they made no effort to rescue. They quietly let him go and turned back to their accustomed ways. There was no need of mourning, and Rhoda made as good a bargain as possible in returning the unused goods to the store. John found a boy who more than compensated for Reub's irregular

services, at less expense—though Reub had never received anything in the way of wages, that, indeed, being one of his grievances. The doctor went back to his study again, and his night-lamp burned later than ever. As this world grew less satisfactory to him he became increasingly anxious to find out just when it would end, and pondered more and more intently the hidden meaning of the "times" in Daniel and the vials in the Revelation, but he slipped by one solemn question:

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

The Master's "seventy times seven" was the one number he did not study. Even had he done so, would it have occurred to him that it could possibly refer to poor Reub?

CHAPTER VII.

THE PATTERN FROM TOWN.

A FEW months later Warren created another ripple of excitement at the farmhouse by announcing his intention of leaving home the next summer.

"Do you too want to go to destruction?" questioned his father, sharply, alluding more directly to Reub by that last word than he had done before.

"No, sir," responded Warren, calmly. "There are other trades as useful and honest as farming, and I want to try one of them: that is all."

"You'd better stay where you are," said the doctor, still shortly.

"You gave up farming for something you liked better, father," suggested Warren.

"I? Well—" The father sighed, but the words had recalled his studies, and with them his accustomed train of thought; and

after a moment's abstraction he added in a gentler tone:

"I've learned this much from it, at least—that unless my calculations are all wrong the time is growing short now. It is of no use for you to make any ambitious plans for getting rich; this world will not last long enough for you to carry them out."

"It will probably last as long as I want it to unless it offers me something pleasanter than it ever has yet," said Warren, moodily. "However, if you think everything is going to end so soon, father, what difference does it make whether I am here on the farm or in some office or workshop in Waynesdale? I don't see why I may not as well have my choice."

"No; it can't make much difference, so long as it is some honest and respectable calling: that is true," admitted the doctor, slowly. "It seems useless to change, that is all. I don't suppose it can make any great difference;" and with that consideration the doctor gradually subsided into tacit acquiesence.

John was disgusted, but he could not

arouse his father to any further opposition; and Warren, having clearly defined his purpose, said no more of his plans, but seemed to have resolved to render such effective service upon the farm for the few months remaining as should leave no ground for complaint.

It was during these months—the summer following Lester's visit—that a dainty little epistle from Flora announced her intention of coming soon to spend a few weeks, "if convenient."

"Well, it's not convenient," snapped Rhoda, tired with a warm day's work and worry.

"We have other visitors—relatives of other members of the family: I do not see why Una should not have her cousin come and see her if she wishes it," said Warren, pointedly.

"Girls who can come here and make themselves useful are very different from a fashionable city lady all fancies, flounces and ruffles," retorted Rhoda, flushing. "She will want some one to do up all her muslins and finery, I suppose, but she need not expect it

from me," she added as Warren walked out of the room whistling carelessly.

Unity, while wonderingly grateful for his prompt speech in her behalf, was not quite certain whether she really did wish her cousin to come. She stood somewhat in awe of the "ruffles and flounces," but still more of Flora's accomplishments, graces and goodness as her own fancy had pictured them. Lester had kept his promise of sending books and papers, and soon after his return Flora had begun to write letters—delicately-tinted sheets, elegantly worded—to "dear Cousin Una," with whom she hoped "to grow better acquainted;" and Unity had replied by timid little missives carefully studied. And now this had grown out of the correspondence! Cousin Flora at a distance, to be admired, dreamed over and reverenced, with an occasional letter as a connecting-link, was a great treasure, but to have her drop down into the homely daily life at the farm was another thing.

Unity's perplexity at the prospect was greater than her pleasure, and she sighed as she looked around her plain little room.

"I'm afraid she will be disappointed when she sees it all—when she knows me just as I am," she said. "She won't want to stay, and, oh dear! I shall not know what to do with her if she does."

There was nothing to be done, however, but to receive Flora as cordially as possible, for Unity's own letters had echoed—sincerely, too, at the time—Flora's wish that they might become better acquainted. But Unity had not thought of a visit as anything but a far-distant possibility, while Flora had planned for it all along, and did not dream that it was unexpected or would produce any consternation.

Fortunately, Dr. Dodge was going to the village on the day of her arrival, and so could meet her at the station; and, though Rhoda muttered, half laughingly, that "it would be a blessing if he forgot her," he did nothing of the kind, but brought a slender, fair-faced, graceful girl home with him in the old chaise.

At the first glimpse of that daintily-attired figure, where material, color and arrangement seemed to blend harmoniously

and make up one faultless whole, Unity felt her own dress grow still more ill-fitting and awkward. She almost envied Rhoda's serene complacency, that had no thought of any superiority except in herself. Unity felt, without being able to explain even to herself, the incongruity between that quietly elegant figure and the stiff gaudy parlor that Rhoda had thrown open with the avowed purpose of "letting her see that we are as good as anybody." And the room up stairs would be far worse.

But when Unity's reluctant feet had led the way thither, Flora did not appear to notice either the faded carpet, the old-fashioned bureau with its cracked glass or the shabby wash-stand. She turned to Unity as soon as they were alone together and, placing a hand on each shoulder, said, with a kiss,

"And you are my own cousin—the only girl-cousin I have in the world! You have no sister, Una, nor have I: don't you think we ought to care a great deal for each other? At least, I mean to love you just as much as I please."

"I'm afraid that won't be very much," answered Unity, laughing shyly, though with tears of pleasure and gratitude shining in her eyes.

"Won't it, though!" said Flora, with a gay little nod of her graceful head that made the words emphatic. "Lester has told me about you."

How pretty she was! Unity's lonely heart went out to her at once, and long before that first toilet was over—for Flora insisted that Una must stay with her while she brushed her hair and rearranged her dress for dinner—they were talking more confidentially than Unity had ever before talked with any girl. She had so long admired and reverenced Flora at a distance that there was neither questioning nor distrust to be overcome; she felt only a wondering delight that her paragon could come near enough to her to be loved.

Rhoda's black eyes looked an expressive and somewhat scornful interrogation when, an hour later, she saw the girls come down with arms twined around each other. The arrangement had been Flora's, and she did

not seem to notice the glance bestowed upon it any more, apparently, than she noticed many discordant elements in the household and its life which revealed themselves that afternoon. The easy grace with which she adjusted herself to circumstances, the sweetness that interpreted every remark in its best possible meaning, the tact that was so unconscious in some directions, so quick to find a smooth line through the tangles that were constantly arising, won from Unity a steadily increasing admiration and mollified even Rhoda's prejudices; so that she observed, as she washed the supper-dishes,

"She's not so full of airs and notions, after all. She's dreadfully gentle and soft-spoken—too milk-and-watery to amount to much, I guess; but I don't believe she's going to be as much bother as we expected. That's one comfort."

Unity lingered down stairs that night to help, as usual, in arranging for the early breakfast. When she went up to her own room, she found Flora standing by the old bureau with an open book before her. She looked around with a smile as Unity entered.

"I waited for you. I thought it would be so pleasant to read together to night;" and she touched the little book, which Unity saw at a glance was a Bible. "Where are you reading now?"

"I—" Unity looked into her face, hesitated a moment, and then answered honestly: "I am not reading anywhere."

But Flora did not understand:

"Oh! You read here and there as it happens—as you feel? I do that sometimes, but not usually. Well, then you won't mind taking my psalm to-night. I like to come back to that often; it is such a sweet good-night psalm;" and the slender white finger pointed to its beginning and the soft voice read the words:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

"My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Flora slowly repeated:

"'He that keepeth thee will not slumber.' I like to think of that, don't you?"

Unity never had thought of it, and the remembrance of an unslumbering, watchful, omniscient Eye always fixed upon her was assuredly not pleasant. She shuddered:

"Oh, Flora, I'm not like you—not good; and it is all so dreadful!" She sighed.

"'Dreadful'?" Flora turned away from the book and looked at her in unfeigned astonishment. "Not dreadful to think that even while we are sleeping our Father is keeping kind, careful, loving watch over us. You do not mean that? I do not understand you."

"No, I suppose not; but I am not good like you," repeated Unity, slowly, "and I don't think— At least, it doesn't seem as if there were any loving watch kept over me. And it is all so dreadful about the 'vials of wrath' and the 'last plagues,' though I don't know what they are, except a great awful something coming nearer and nearer every day to crush the world and every one on it. It seems so horrible sometimes that I wish I could get away from it

anywhere. There is no comfort only in trying not to think about it at all."

"You poor little—" "Heathen," Flora had almost said; but she checked the last word unspoken. "What a strange way to think of the Bible! Did you never read 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus'?"

"No; I do not know. I have not read much," Unity confessed, reluctantly. She shrank from the whole subject. "Father reads it, and—I have not wanted to."

Some things which she had heard interpreted the strangeness of that last sentence to Flora.

"Poor little Una!" she exclaimed, pityingly, with her soft white hands clasping her cousin's browned and roughened ones. "Do you suppose the Lord Jesus seemed a dreadful visitor to those homes in Palestine where he healed their sick, restored sight to their blind and gave their dead back to their arms? And is it awful for us to think that he cares for us in just the same way now—that he is ready to answer our prayers, heal our sorrows, save us from our sins, protect

those we love and carry us safely through life and death?"

"No, no! Oh, if he could be that to any one!" exclaimed Unity, with a deep breath, a hungering earnestness in her eyes.

"He is that to me," answered Flora, softly. "Come, Una; let us read the story together while I am here;" and she turned to the beginning of the Gospels.

Three years older than Una, her superior in education and culture—that much-abused word of many meanings—fair, gentle and winning, was it strange that she seemed almost an angel of loveliness and goodness to the young girl that night, or that the lonely, hungry heart at once went out to her? That was the beginning of many readings, of many long talks, and slowly there grew in Unity's mind some comprehension of the love and grace, the power and tenderness, of the One who came, not to condemn the world, but to save the world. Into her heart came a great longing to be one of his own, to have for herself this treasure which made her cousin's life so radiant.

Meanwhile, Flora seemed quite at home in the old farmhouse. She busied herself with books and letters while Unity was occupied with housework, and whenever the latter could gain leisure they wandered off together for long rambles in the woods and by the riverside. Flora often spoke of home and her friends there, but seemed quite satisfied with Unity's companionship.

"Little wonder she likes you," said Rhoda, when one day Unity inadvertently commented upon the fact in a wondering, grateful way. "Why shouldn't she, when you praise her and pet her from morning till night, run up stairs and down for her, and heat yourself nearly to death to make custards just the way she likes them or do up ruffles fit for Her Ladyship to wear? She never offers to help you."

"She doesn't know how," answered Unity.

"She might learn," replied Rhoda, sharply; "but it's a good deal easier to say, 'Dear Cousin Una, it's too bad for you to work so!' Of course she likes to be worshiped and treated as if she were above common clay—who wouldn't?—but it's always you that

carry the bundles and make a way through the rough places. I believe you'd lie down in the mud any time, Unity Dodge, and let her walk over you, rather than have her get her dainty feet wet. Yes, I should suppose she'd like you. Who braided her long hair for her this afternoon, I'd like to know, after working over the ironing-table all the morning while she lay on the lounge?"

But Unity did not answer. "Flora has done so much more than that for me—so much more than I can ever do for her," she thought, with a grateful throb of her loving heart. Life, its meanings, its purposes, its whole outlook, was changing for her since her cousin came. A new peace and a new hope were taking the place of the old dread. And, besides finding a heavenly Friend, when had she ever before been so rich in human friendship as now?

Flora sat on the old vine-shaded porch and looked up at the flushed face that joined her:

"Tired, aren't you? Come here and sit by me in the shade and rest. You are a great deal more useful than I am, Una."

Unity looked admiringly at the crown of fair hair and at the white, delicate hands that were playing with the vine-leaves, and shook her head deprecatingly:

"You know better than that, Flo darling. I can do only rough, common things, but you— Think of all you can do, of all you have done for me."

Flora laughed softly, not ill-pleased, though she only said,

"You think me better than I am."

After a moment she asked,

"This is Wednesday night, isn't it? Don't any of you ever go to the prayer-meeting?"

"'Prayer-meeting'!" repeated Unity, bewildered. "I don't know whether there is one or not. Why do you think there is?" Then, as she watched her cousin's face, she added: "There may be one in the village, you know, Flora, but that is some distance—too far for us to go in the evening. And, really, I do not know anything about it."

"I suppose it is too far for us to go alone—for you to go regularly," answered

Flora, gravely. "I did not think of that; I always go at home. It will be a great loss to you, Una."

"If you want to go to-night, I will go with you," said Warren, suddenly appearing in the doorway behind them—"that is, if you do not mind the walk. We cannot very well have the horses; they have been working all day."

Unity was too much surprised by his unexpected appearance and such an utterly unlooked-for proposal to say anything, but Flora turned with her quick, bright smile:

"Oh, thank you, Cousin Warren! That is very kind.—Of course we will be glad to go, won't we, Una?"

Thus appealed to, Una assented, though she could not appreciate the loss of such a service as Flora did, and she was, moreover, too tired to enjoy the prospect of a walk to the village. Wonder at Warren, however, predominated for the time over every other feeling. He had apparently bestowed but little attention upon his cousin so far—no more than would scantily satisfy the requirements of ordinary politeness. If he

had ever before overheard or felt an interest in any of their conversations, he had given no token of it, Unity reflected, and what freak possessed him now? She watched him curiously during that quiet walk in the early twilight, but his face revealed nothing new, and his manner seemed to say that in offering to be their escort he had meant simply that and nothing more; and Flora's efforts could not draw him into any continuous conversation.

When they reached the church door, Warren paused on the steps:

"I'll come around by the time the meeting is over. It lasts about an hour, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I thought you were coming in with us! Won't you? Please do, Cousin Warren."

But the persuasive tone was lost.

"No, thank you. I have some errands at the stores, but I will be here in time to go home with you."

"I wish he had come in," whispered Flora, regretfully, as he turned away.

Unity did not know whether she wished it

or not; she was not yet quite sure that she wished to be there herself. It was all new to her. The rather dim light that had attracted a circle of buzzing insects, and the thin congregation scattered in small groups through the room, were not very inspiriting. She glanced at the gray-haired minister, of whom she had always stood in awe, and then at the large Bible on the desk before him. What if he should read some of those prophecies which always troubled her, and should interpret them as her father did?

But nothing of the kind happened. In trembling, earnest tones he slowly read a chapter of peace and trust—"One of Flora's chapters," the reassured listener whispered to herself. The hymn that followed breathed the same spirit; and if the prayers offered by one and another were rambling and ungrammatical, and in one or two instances painfully slow and halting, they at least sounded sincere. Unity wondered how it all seemed to Flora, and stole a glance at the fair face beside her. It was grave and attentive, as if she really were enjoying the services, though, of course, it must be very different

from those at home for which she cared so much, Unity reasoned.

Presently, in a brief pause that no one appeared quite ready to fill, Unity was startled to hear the clear voice beside her repeat with lingering emphasis a precious promise:

"'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.'"

No other words spoken that evening thrilled Unity as did those, yet how could Flora have dared to utter them there? But she had done it as simply as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Unity sighed. She wished she could attain that "perfect peace;" she wished more frequently than ever that she could be like Flora as she heard the sweet, unfaltering tones in the closing hymn:

> "His oath, his covenant and blood
> Support me in the whelming flood;
> When all around my soul gives way,
> His truth is then my shield and stay."

Warren was waiting for them near the door when they passed out. His sister

wondered how long he had been there—whether he had but just entered or had been there for a part of the service? But no word of his on the homeward way enlightened her. One could almost have imagined that he exerted himself to talk more than usual for the express purpose of turning the conversation away from the meeting.

In any case, the subject was not mentioned until the two girls were in their own room, and then Flora said,

"I wish you could go to one of our meetings at home, Una, and into our Sunday-school. There are so many things I want you to see and learn! We really must in some way so manage that I can have you for a good long visit this winter."

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISIT TO FLORA.

EVEN Flora's managing could not bring about a visit to the city the next winter. Unity, who had never in her life spent a week from home, did not expect anything of the kind, and was not disappointed; but Flora's regretful letters came frequently.

Warren had fulfilled his purpose of going to Waynesdale, and, with both boys away, the daily life in the old farmhouse seemed strangely changed. Until she missed it she had not known that Warren's usually silent presence was so much to her; then, looking backward, she saw that during the past year she had unconsciously drawn nearer to him, and she recalled countless trifling incidents that had shown his interest in her. If she had been like Flora, what might she not have done for him and for Reub—"Poor Reub!" she thought, with a sigh.

A new boy had come to the house, however, a very small one, and entirely useless so far as farm-work was concerned; but John uttered no complaints on that account, and seemed greatly delighted with the acquisition, praising him most heartily when he spent the greatest number of hours in luxurious indolence in his cradle.

Dr. Dodge bestowed upon his grandson a scrutiny at once curious and pathetic:

"He's a fine fellow, John, but he does not know what sort of a world he has come into. It doesn't seem but a little while since— Ah! Well, well!" With a sigh the doctor broke off his retrospect and returned to his books.

A child in the house was a treasure to Unity, yet a somewhat costly treasure in the tax it laid upon her time and strength, making the busy days still busier and using up the few leisure-hours she had before called her own. Love for the little one and her new desire to do faithfully whatever her hand found to do wrought willing service even beyond the strength of the slender form, and the young girl was forced to

acknowledge to herself that she felt sadly wearied and languid when spring came.

Warren was the first to notice it on one of those occasional visits home which Rhoda secretly questioned why he paid, and which even Unity sometimes wondered over. He did not seem either to bring or to seek much information. He looked in on his father, watched Unity, noted changes on the farm and about the house with a kind of quiet interest, but without much comment, stayed a day and went away.

"It always seems as if he didn't care particularly for anybody—as if he came for nothing special and went away for the same reason," said Rhoda.

One morning Unity was carrying the fretting baby to and fro with slow steps when her brother abruptly turned to her:

"Why don't you sit down with that child? See here, Una! playing nursemaid for that little fellow is all right so far as you like it, but you mustn't fancy there is any need for your doing it when you're not able. That is no duty to yourself or to anybody else. John and Rhoda can afford to hire more

help if it is wanted; I know the farm is paying well enough for that."

"Oh, but Rhoda would—" "Never consent to such a thing," she had been about to say; but she wisely changed the sentence into "would not be willing to trust Baby with every one. Besides, I like to take care of him," she added; "only I am so tired lately. I think it is these spring mornings that have made me feel so."

"Why don't you go and see Flora?" Warren suddenly demanded. "Isn't she always writing to have you come?"

"Yes, but I can't go. I've never really thought of it," she said, in astonishment. "Why, Warren, how could I?"

"Why couldn't you?" he replied, half impatiently. "You are made of the same material as other girls and put into the same world, but it seems to me they have and do a great many things that are always called impossible for you." Then he walked away, leaving her bewildered and with no answer ready even if he had waited for one.

Una thought he must afterward have spoken to his father about it. And then,

a little later, came another letter from Flora, this time addressed to Dr. Dodge himself and urging that her cousin should be allowed to pay her a visit.

Exactly how so wonderful an event was brought about Unity could scarcely understand, but at the dinner-table her father mentioned the letter he had received, and added, in his slow, half-abstracted way,

"Perhaps it is best for her to go. They are her relatives. Yes, she'd better go."

After the first moment of astonishment John glanced doubtfully at Rhoda and began to demur. He did not know about that. Spring was a pretty busy season, and it would be hard for Rhoda to manage alone. Flora had been there only the summer before, and it was not likely Unity cared much about seeing her again so soon. That sort of a visit would be expensive, too.

But Dr. Dodge looked at him with the same absent gaze, and without seeming to have heard a word he had uttered proceeded meditatively, as if trying to recall a partially forgotten train of thought:

"As Warren says, she has some right in

the property and its—its profits. I do not see that it matters much in days like these—very little; but it may be better for her to go. A trip once in a while— I suppose she has not traveled much lately."

As Unity had never journeyed farther from home than the neighboring town of Waynesdale, the supposition was so absurdly correct that it brought a faint smile even to Rhoda's face, which had worn an extremely dissatisfied expression since the conversation began.

"I think Warren is troubling himself a good deal about things that don't concern him," commented Mrs. John, briefly, when dinner was over.

But soon thereafter it happened that her sister arrived for one of her periodical visits, thereby providing Rhoda with both company and help; and so, though Unity scarcely knew how it all came about, she one day found herself in the cars, actually on her way to visit Flora. She glanced down at her new traveling-dress and satchel for confirmation when John and the long platform at the village station had vanished from

sight. That she had but a few hours' ride before her, with no occasion to change cars, freed her from all anxiety, and she nestled comfortably back in her seat to enjoy the beautiful panorama unfolding before her, and to indulge in more brilliant day-dreams than were common to her; for, after this marvelous expedition, few things seemed impossible.

Lester was awaiting her on her arrival, and at once he led the way to a carriage.

"No, Flora is not here," he said, noticing her quick, expectant look. "She had to go to a meeting of some sort, and so sent me to meet you. She said she would be at home as early as possible, which means when the meeting is ended. You needn't feel hurt about it," he continued, with another of those quick glances at her face. "If Flo had a Dorcas society on hand, she wouldn't come to meet the queen of Sheba."

"Flora does so much!" Unity remarked, admiringly, her momentary disappointment vanishing in appreciation of her cousin's many talents and the demand there must be for their exercise.

Lester twisted his face into an indescribable expression and shrugged his shoulders:

"I'm glad I'm not so fearfully useful. There are a few things in this world that I think will get along without my attending to them. Mother shakes her head over me, but I really believe it is a consolation to her sometimes that I haven't undertaken to run all creation. I do not feel obliged to get up in time to see that the sun rises properly, and I am fully convinced that it can set without the formation of a society, with president, vice-president and secretary, to attend to it."

This was still the same Lester, only two years older and but little changed except in the matter of inches, Unity thought. She laughed:

"You cannot make me believe that Flora is busying herself with all manner of useless undertakings."

"Oh, they are useful, of course—very," with another wry face. "Only it strikes an ignorant mind that if one wants to give a sixpence to a beggar it would be the most sensible way just to give it, instead of organ-

izing a society with constitution and by-laws to hold six meetings a month and listen to the report of sixteen committees on the condition of paupers in Europe and the advisableness of giving a concert to aid this particular one in America. It is beautiful and systematic, and all that; but the beggar may possibly die before he gets the sixpence. Now, there is that great moral-reform movement for the suppression of chewing-gum among small boys—"

"Lester! what nonsense!" interrupted Unity, amused but puzzled.

"Well, perhaps that isn't the object. If you think it's so absurd, of course I must be laboring under a mistake," admitted Lester, with an injured air. "But, really, there are so many reforms of the utmost importance in their effect upon the rising generation, as the lecturers say, that it isn't much wonder a fellow gets them a little crooked now and then."

Unity laughed, though she was half vexed with herself for laughing at what she felt to be ridicule of some of those great enterprises of which Flora had spoken with such

glowing enthusiasm. She wondered that his sister's kindling eyes and persuasive voice had not won Lester to greater sympathy with those things than he apparently possessed. Still, he might feel more than he manifested. But she had little time to ponder the subject, for he began to ask questions about the farm and the old house and its inmates, and before they were fairly answered the carriage stopped.

"Here we are," said Lester, leading the way up a flight of stone steps and into a softly carpeted but dark hall. He pushed open a door, and in another moment Unity found herself in the room beyond, receiving the greeting of the aunt whom she had never seen:

"And this is Una? My dear child, I am glad to see you. I am so sorry Flora couldn't be here this afternoon! but she felt obliged to go to the meeting. And then I was afraid Lester would miss you in some way."

"Lester misses very few things that he cares to find," observed that young gentleman, with a deeper truthfulness than his mother perceived.

"Lay off your wraps, my dear. Or would you rather go directly to your room without waiting for Flora? The wind is cool to-day: I hope you haven't taken cold in the cars," pursued Mrs. Dodge. She was a small, delicate, fair-faced woman with little anxious lines between her eyes—a face that bore the trace of no great sorrow, but of innumerable small worries, "to which," as Lester once saucily declared, "she devoted her mind."

"Don't own it in any case," he hastened to warn Unity. "Mother is always uneasy until she can find that we have taken cold in some way, and then more uneasy still until she has prepared horrible doses to cure it."

"Now, Lester, you shouldn't run on so. That fashion of exaggerating is growing to be a bad habit with you," expostulated his mother. But as he walked away with a careless laugh to give directions concerning Unity's trunk, she looked after him with a fond smile. "He is the very light of the house, with his gay spirits," she declared; but immediately added, with a faint sigh, "Still, I am often anxious about him, dear

boy! If he were only a little more serious about some things!"

Mrs. Dodge was very kind to her niece —almost oppressively so, it seemed to Unity, who was accustomed to no such careful solicitude. She answered the many inquiries concerning her family and her journey, but she was relieved when, an hour later, she heard Flora's voice in the hall and her quick step approaching.

"Darling Una, you really are here at last!" she exclaimed, with a kiss and an embrace. "Did you think I was rude and unkind, and dreadful generally, because I wasn't at home to meet you?" The last vestige of such a feeling vanished before the warmth of her welcome, and Unity was ashamed of having entertained the faintest trace of it as her cousin proceeded: "It was too bad, dear, and I was sorry, but it was a meeting I could not very well neglect—in the interest of one of our mission schools—and I knew I could trust to your unselfishness where anything of that kind was at stake."

"Stake'? Yes," drawled Lester, mis-

chievously. "You'd better explain, Flo, what a beautiful work of benevolence it is that induces a dozen young ladies to travel to the outskirts of the city and meet a troop of boys from respectable families who are regularly schooled—or Sunday-schooled—every day of the week. The ladies amuse themselves with the idea that they are doing mission work—gathering in the highways and hedges—while the youngsters go for the fun of the thing, ready to swallow a little more school because of the extra inducements offered in the way of stories, presents and festivals. It is a great work. Almost any good-natured boy can afford to play heathen once a week for the sake of pleasing the young ladies, you know, having a good time and a pocket full of candy now and then."

"Will you come up stairs, Una? I am so glad to have you here!"

There was a slight flush on Flora's cheek, but, aside from that, she did not seem to notice her brother's remark as she put her arm around Unity and led her away. What a beautiful room Flora's was, with its softly-

blending tints of carpet and curtains, its dainty matching of cushions and lambrequins! Unity's wondering, delighted eyes noted it all—the pictures, the perfect toilet appointments, the sunny window with its flowers, the cozy chairs inviting rest. It was the first really handsome room she had ever seen. Then she glanced at Flora and thought how in harmony she seemed with all her surroundings, and her second thought was impulsively outspoken:

"Flora, I wonder how you ever cared for me, or why you want me? Your life doesn't need me; I am not like—this."

"You are like yourself, and that is better. Perhaps I care for you all the more because you are not like everything and everybody else around me," Flora answered, without taking the trouble to analyze—she seldom did that—the reason for her liking. Her low, pleasant laugh accompanied the words, but that slight flush was still on her cheeks, and in a moment she came closer to Unity and laid a hand on her shoulder: "Dear, you must not mind what Lester says; you must not let him prejudice you. I may as

well tell you, since you will be sure to see it, that in many ways he is not in sympathy with me."

It was strange that the fair face, the winning voice and manner that were so potent with others, should be powerless with this only brother, Unity thought; and something of her wonder must have found expression in her eyes, for Flora saw and hastened to answer it:

"Yes, I know, Una. I suppose it must appear very strange to you, but really Lester has such a fashion of ridiculing subjects—projects rather—that are almost sacred to me that I think the best way to avoid such irreverent trifling is seldom to speak of such things before him. He has been greatly indulged too. I think mamma is wrong in allowing it; she ought to interfere more than she does."

Both tone and words surprised Unity, but it was Flora's low voice that was speaking and Flora's sweet face, somewhat clouded now, that was looking into hers, so it must be right some way; there must be a good reason. She was sure of it the next moment,

and fully sympathetic when her cousin added with a little sigh:

"So, you see, Una, my path is not all sunshine."

But the sunshine was back again presently as they talked of other matters, exchanging various items of intelligence and interest that had not found their way into letters; and when the conversation came gradually and naturally back to Flora's many occupations, she was ready to explain candidly:

"I do not mean to say there was no truth in what Lester said of that school, but it was truth sadly exaggerated and caricatured. The fact is the school was established away out there for the purpose of drawing in a host of little vagabonds who are not regularly taught anywhere, but a good many boys from up-town schools heard about it and go out there too, because they want something to do, I suppose, and— Well, as Lester says, there are inducements held out, and it is vexatious that they bring in more of the class we do not want than of the class we do want. But you can very easily see that a work may be good even though at-

tending it there are some evils that we have not yet been able to remedy."

Unity had completed her toilet with the consciousness, not quite comfortable, that her cousin's eyes noted every detail, though trying to betray no token of doing so. Of course the articles packed in that modest trunk were very unlike the rich, soft textures that were revealed for a moment when Flora's closet doors were thrown carelessly open. But Flora did not really care much for such things—at least, she did not value any one more or less because of them. Unity had reassured herself with that thought before she left home, and she repeated its consolation now as she announced her readiness to descend.

"There will be no one but ourselves here this evening," said Flora, whether in answer to some reflection of her own or to something she saw in Unity's face was not apparent—"at least, I hope there will be no one else: we want you all to ourselves for one evening."

The family circle for the time numbered but the three members, as Mr. Dodge was in

Europe. Flora had urged his absence and their loneliness as a strong plea for her cousin's visit, though her father's business so frequently called him from home that they had all grown accustomed to, if not satisfied with, it.

That first evening was a delightful one to Unity, and long before it ended she decided that if any clouds existed in Flora's sky they were neither large nor dark. Lester was in the best of spirits, as bright, entertaining and agreeable as only Lester could be, while his sister seemed quite her sweet, untroubled self again. The flute and the piano discoursed in harmony, and the anxious lines were smoothed away from Mrs. Dodge's forehead as she listened, smiled and suggested new favorites—a gentle, motherly presence that awoke in Unity's heart, as she glanced at her cousin, a faint refrain of the old cry of her childhood: "I'm not like other girls, 'cause I haven't any mother."

Mrs. Dodge had insisted upon seating her in a large easy-chair where she could "rest while she listened," and still pressed upon her the watchful attentions that had seemed

almost burdensome in the afternoon, but grew more natural now as Unity saw how tirelessly her aunt bestowed them upon her own children. Some words from an old poem flashed through the girl's mind their sweet explanation—

> "How that small fretting fretfulness
> Was but love's over-anxiousness,
> Which had not been had love been less."

Music, books and magazines, and then a long pleasant talk, filled the hours full.

Lester's one teasing remark was reserved for the close:

"Haven't I been almost as good as a mission-school boy, Flo?"

But Flora only laughed good-naturedly:

"I mean to take Una to see my schools and classes, and then she can decide for herself how you compare with the other urchins."

"Poor Una!" sighed Lester, commiseratingly, as he bade them good-night. And then he looked back to add: "Before you decide fully in favor of the 'other urchins,' Una, you must remember that Miss Dodge

doesn't bestow so much care upon me as she does upon them. I do pretty well, considering my disadvantages."

As the two girls read their evening chapter together in their room that night Flora's finger pointed to one verse:

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

"I suppose," said Unity, after a moment's silent wondering why Flora should notice that verse particularly, "that must have been a great comfort to the martyrs in the olden times, and to people now who really do suffer for Christ's sake; but it doesn't seem to mean so much to us in these days."

"Do you think so?" questioned Flora, slowly. "There are so many kinds of persecution, Una! We are not confronted by stake, fagots or dungeons, of course, but it sometimes seems as if hindrances, reproaches and ridicule were almost as hard for a sensitive spirit to meet. No, I do not believe those words were altogether intended for old times or for other countries."

Unity understood then, but there flashed upon her thought a memory of St. Paul—

"in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," yet saying steadfastly, "None of these things move me." The beautiful room before her was a sharp contrast to that mental picture, and the dainty silken-robed figure by her side looked, even to her loving, sympathetic eyes, a very comfortable martyr.

CHAPTER IX.

ONE FACE IN THE STREET-PARADE.

"LOOP this lace at your throat; it just suits that dark dress," suggested Flora, one morning, substituting a filmy scarf of her own for the ribbon Una had taken up.

They were dressing to go out, and this remark was merely a parenthesis, for Flora was busily talking of other things. She had made several such suggestions and changes during the course of the toilet—made them so quietly and naturally that she scarcely seemed to bestow a thought upon them herself. But through all the conversation Unity felt that her cousin's eyes noted every detail of her dress, and she began to be nervous and uneasy over every article. Still, there was neither scrutiny nor criticism to which she could object. She felt rather than saw it, but her face flushed slightly when Flora stayed her hand as she was reaching for her

hat and placed a pretty brown turban on her head instead:

"That just suits your face, Una; and how beautifully it matches your dress!" Then as she caught Una's eyes she paused suddenly at something she read there: "I beg your pardon, my dear. Perhaps you don't like my playing dressing-maid? I always did wish I had a younger sister to dress up, study effects for and fuss over as I pleased, and here I am making one of you without stopping to ask your leave. Don't wear the hat, of course, if you don't like it. It is very possible the younger sister might have an opinion of her own, after all."

Which explanation, uttered laughingly, made the whole matter seem too trivial to be worth an objection—too kind to deserve one; and Unity answered sincerely:

"I think the young lady might safely trust to your taste."

And she wore the brown turban, though still feeling a little uncomfortable as they passed out into the street. She wished it had not happened on Sunday, when she wanted her mind free from vexing thoughts;

but she had her wish, for the trifling annoyance was wholly forgotten, a little later, when she found herself in the large Sunday-school room.

"I will introduce you to some of the teachers and find a place for you in one of the Bible classes; or you can go with me if you wish?" Flora had paused a moment in the vestibule to whisper interrogatively.

"I'll go with you if you don't mind," Una answered, hurriedly; and they entered the spacious, well-lighted, pleasant room.

The whole scene was new to Unity—very different from the school in the little village church at home, though even that she had so seldom attended that it was unfamiliar. She followed Flora to her class, watched her greet some of her girls as they entered, while books were rapidly but quietly distributed, and then the single clear note of a bell called the occupants of the room to order. The few words of thanksgiving and petition, followed by the many voices slowly repeating the Lord's Prayer in unison, and then the music of the hymn—

"Turning swift at thy sweet summons,
Evermore, O Christ, would we,
For thy love all else forsaking,
Follow, follow thee"—

thrilled her strangely. Her eyes filled with tears, and she could scarcely see to find the chapter to which all about her turned so readily for the responsive reading. Another hymn followed, and then sliding-doors were noiselessly closed, giving the infant-class an apartment by themselves, while in the larger outer room the teachers turned to their classes with the promptness of those who have no minutes to waste. Collection envelopes and attendance cards were expeditiously passed and marked, and the lessons began. How many busy workers there were —superintendent, assistants, teachers, librarians, secretary—performing so many different offices, yet each seemingly filling so naturally the appointed place! How beautiful and wonderful it all was!

Unity glanced from one to another of the groups about her before her attention finally centred upon Flora and her class and she grew interested in the lesson itself. A

circle of half-grown girls, bright, eager, full of restless longings and almost impatient wonderings, striving to read the meaning of all the life within them and around them, how daringly they questioned! It was not at all after the fashion of the "instructive conversations" in good books—of which Unity had read a few—and she listened wonderingly.

"'Always to pray and not to faint.' Miss Dodge, what does that mean?"

"It means, I think, that sometimes we pray for things—we so often do—and they don't come, and then are to keep on having faith just the same."

"And then," added another, "when we pray for things and they do come, we sometimes say to ourselves, 'I'm not sure it is an answer, after all; maybe it would have come, any way.'"

"Besides," suggested a slower voice, "we often want things—want them oh so much! —when we are not at all sure that God will think it best for us to have them. Then how can we pray in faith? or oughtn't we to pray for such things at all?"

Gently, patiently, the teacher took up the tangles, straightening and smoothing them out as simply and clearly as she was able, tender with the crude imaginings and perplexities and welcoming the real inquiry for the truth, however worded. She spoke of the love for the Father in heaven, of his care for the little things that make up daily happiness, as well as for the greater things that concern the spirit's holiness; of how confidently they might carry every desire, every request, to him, if only they were willing to trust to his knowing better than themselves what was really best.

"Because, you see, girls, he is our Father, too loving and good, if we ask a stone thinking it is bread, to mock us by giving exactly what we ask for. Why, look back over your own prayers. You are young, yet can you not nearly all remember asking for things which now you can see would have been the very reverse of blessings if God had granted them?"

One and another bright head nodded assent to this question. The circle had clustered closer around their teacher in the

interest of the conversation, and the faces wore a softer, more reverent look, while Flora's was all aglow with her subject. How fair, sweet and earnest she was! Unity watched her wistfully with a throb of pain at her heart. Not jealousy or envy: Flora deserved all that was hers, love whispered loyally; but it would be so pleasant to have some part in all this noble work, and it seemed so far removed from her own life.

Another touch of the bell, quick, imperative, and the lesson hour was over. Unity sympathized with the half-petulant remark of one of the girls:

"That bell always rings too soon."

"Well, how did you like our school?" questioned Flora on their homeward way.

"'Like it'? Oh, Flora, how good and beautiful it all is!" Unity exclaimed, with that wistful pain still in her voice. "I wish I could have some share in such work."

"And can you not, dear? Wait until you go home again, and you will find new ways and plans for work opening before

you—not just the same work, perhaps, but equally good and useful," said Flora, hopefully. "It is only because—"

Two shabbily-dressed children playing on the street attracted her attention, and she broke off her sentence abruptly to speak to them:

"Good-morning, boys. This is a nice day, isn't it? Have you been to Sunday-school anywhere?"

After a prolonged stare the older of the two replied:

"We don't b'long."

"Don't you? That is too bad," said Flora's kindliest tones. "I should think you would like to go to one. They have such nice music and books and papers. Here are two of the papers, and two pretty cards. You may take them home and read the stories. You can read, can't you?"

A rather dubious nod of the head answered, and after another wondering stare, first at the papers and then at their giver, one of the boys volunteered the information:

"Mother can't keep us in clothes to go

to school, nor nothin'; and, ary way, she's sick now."

"Is she? Where do you live?"

Flora's ready note-book received name, street and number, and after a few more questions she and her cousin passed on.

"I should never have thought of that," said Unity, soberly. "I should have passed such children without a thought of stopping to speak to them."

"But you will think after this," smiled Flora. "And one reason why you would not have thought at once, I suppose, is because you so seldom meet such cases at home. I must hunt up these people to-morrow and learn who and what they are."

Both girls were busied in Mrs. Dodge's room the next morning, assisting her in assorting collars and laces and packing her trunk preparatory to a two weeks' absence—a visit which it had been arranged she should make while Unity could remain with Flora.

"Usually mamma fancies that she cannot leave home, but there isn't a bit of reason why she should not go now, while I have

you for company and to help me keep house," said Flora; and Unity smiled acquiescence, though privately of the opinion that any housekeeping Flora might undertake would not be very arduous.

"You know very little about it, child," sighed Mrs. Dodge, with the little anxious lines drawing her brows together. "There are a hundred things that may happen."

"And that may not happen," laughed Flora. "Now, mamma dear, don't worry, but have a real pleasant visit for once."

Nevertheless, with all the possibilities and peradventures in her mind, she had so many arrangements to make, so many directions and messages to leave, so many precautions to take, that both Flora and Una had a busy morning in their capacity of assistants, and not until the early dinner was over and the carriage had rolled away toward the station did they find themselves free.

"Dear me! It is always equal to launching a ship," cried Flora, in a tone at which Unity laughed, though she wondered at it a little also. But her cousin instantly added: "Lester will see her safely provided with

tickets and a seat, so we can feel comfortable about her, and I do hope she will enjoy the trip. Shall we dress and go out to hunt up the 'local habitation' of my two little vagabonds?"

The walk proved a long one, but the afternoon was pleasant, and a view of the lower parts of the city, where their walks and drives seldom took them, interested Unity. They had no difficulty in finding the place they sought, and the visit, the family, the story Flora's kindly inquiries elicited, occupied the minds of both as they walked slowly homeward talking it over, until a sudden vision completely banished it from Unity's thought. They had turned into a wider street, when they found themselves unexpectedly in the midst of a crowd who were pushing and jostling on the sidewalk. A band of music sounded near at hand, and a moment later a motley procession appeared marching slowly down the road —a number of horses and elephants, some gayly-painted dusty cages, two or three chariots of tarnished gilt—followed by a troop of small boys.

The recognition of the strayed brother. Page 199.

"That's the circus that was to have come in this morning, but the train was off time; so it's only just got here," explained one of the latter personages for the benefit of his companions. "It's a-goin' to show out by Styles's lot to-night."

Flora drew her cousin into a deep-arched doorway to let the crowd pass; but, as the procession wound slowly by, among the riders, in their tawdry uniforms, Unity saw a face that she recognized at the first swift glance.

"Oh, Reub!" she cried, involuntarily.

The young man turned quickly at the name, half drew rein, and then, with a slight motion of his hand that might or might not have meant recognition, rode on.

Other heads turned also at that quick call, but few except Flora really knew who had uttered it, and even she did not understand it. She looked at her cousin wonderingly, a little mortified, too, by the attention so suddenly attracted to them, but her low "Why, Una!" restrained the girl's impulsive movement to spring forward and recalled her to herself. In a moment or two the

crowd swept on in pursuit of the pageant, and Unity, who had strained her gaze as long as the horses were in sight, turned again to her companion with a long, troubled breath:

"Oh, Flora, that was my brother Reub! How can I let him go on so?"

"Your brother who ran away?" questioned Flora.

"Yes; and I have never seen him, never heard from him, since, except to know that he had joined some such company as this. Father disowned him, you know, and forbade our even so much as mentioning his name again."

"It is very hard for you, dear, but Uncle Dodge is right, of course. You cannot countenance him in any such dreadful life." The ready tears came to Flora's beautiful eyes as she spoke, and after a moment she added softly: "I can understand how you must feel, Una, but still you must try to look at it differently. You could not help it. You are not to blame for his conduct, and so it is no real disgrace to you."

"I was not thinking of that—of myself:

I was only thinking of poor Reub," answered Unity, simply; and they walked homeward in silence.

For Unity could not help thinking of Reuben. She fancied that he had not looked particularly happy, well cared for or well satisfied, and she was not ready to accept with Flora's quiet "of course" the proposition that it was best to have nothing to do with him. Her father had indeed cast him off, and had forbidden the others to mention his name. He had not forbidden them to hold communication with him. Perhaps he had intended that, perhaps he had not thought of it; but, in any case, the right and the wrong of the matter did not appear so clear to her as seemingly it did to her cousin. She could not shake off the feeling, grown strong of late, that Reuben might have been different if there had been some one to help him—if she herself had been older, wiser and more loving. Almost it seemed as if she owed to poor Reub a debt from those old days. And what prospect was there of his leaving this "dreadful life," as Flora had called it, while he believed that

his whole family had disowned him and that he had neither home nor friends?

Unity slipped up stairs that afternoon to ponder the subject alone, but all her efforts at untangling the vexed questions did not settle them very clearly, and it was a somewhat troubled face that joined Flora and Lester at the tea-table.

"Are you too tired to go out with me this evening?" asked Flora as the three retired to the parlor. "There is a committee meeting to-night, and Miss May will call for me in half an hour."

"I am not tired," admitted Unity, honestly, "but—"

"Committee discussions are not very interesting to those not concerned?" laughed Flora, noticing her hesitation. "I will leave you with Lester, then, and he must see that you have a pleasant evening."

"Command my resources to the whole of my kingdom," answered Lester, lazily, but looking pleased. "I thought you must be made of heroic stuff if you could stand many of Flo's committee sieges."

Flora ran to her room for shawl and hat,

and, the door-bell ringing as she came down, only looked into the parlor for a moment to wish them "Good-night" and a pleasant time.

"Now, what shall it be?" asked Lester, when they were left alone. "Will you go out for a ride? or would you like a concert—there is a good one—or a lecture? Or," mischievously, "I suppose I might find a meeting somewhere if nothing else will satisfy you."

"I believe," said Unity, hesitatingly, "that I should prefer—the circus."

"'The circus'!" Lester looked at her for one instant in amazement, then threw his head back against the sofa and laughed. "Country and first principles will out, spite of everything. If Flo could only have heard you say that! Handel concerts and lyceum lectures are nothing to a circus! My dear coz, you shall go if I can find your favorite entertainment in the city limits."

"It isn't my favorite amusement," laughed Unity, but with the troubled look instantly coming back to her face. "And it isn't a return to first principles, either; for you

ought to know my father well enough to be sure that I have never been to such a place in my life. But— Oh, Lester, it is about Reub;" and she told the story of the afternoon's encounter. "I do not know what to do—what I ought to do," she concluded— "but I feel as if I must see him again, and I do not know how to manage it in any other way."

Lester had grown grave at once, and listened to her story in silence. Some way, she found it easier to speak to him about it than it had been when she had spoken to his sister upon the same subject.

"Would it do for me to go alone?" he asked, but immediately answered his own question: "No, I suppose not. Reub never knew me very well—never liked me at all; and he wouldn't listen to me. I hardly see how you can find a chance to speak to him, but we will try it. Run and get ready as soon as you can; we haven't much time to spare."

"Do you think I am wrong?" asked Unity, anxiously, as they hastened down the street. "I am afraid Flora would think

so. She said something to-day about considering my father's wishes, and that he was right of course."

"Oh, I won't pretend to dispute the wisdom of Flo's opinions," answered Lester, rather dryly, "and I don't want to say anything against your father; but it does seem to me that denouncing and disinheriting and all that sort of thing is not exactly the style of the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. I always supposed that intended to represent the one perfect Father. Besides, what's the use? Reub is his father's son and your brother, and forty circuses and a thousand disownings cannot make him one whit less the one or the other.—I wouldn't be discouraged, Una," he added, kindly, after a few moments' silence; "he may turn out all right, after all. I can very easily imagine how a fellow might get restless, discontented and wild enough to do such a thing, and not be wholly bad, either."

They had left the more crowded streets and turned into quieter ways when the distant music finally assured them that they were in the right direction. Then occurred

to Unity another thought, born of Flora's remark in the afternoon.

"Lester, I am afraid this is hardly fair to you," she said. "However anxious I may be about my brother, you may feel it some disgrace to be—to have—"

"Don't worry your poor little heart about that," interposed Lester, decidedly. "When I have no sins of my own to be ashamed of, and have to fall back on my relations for my mortifications, I shall hold my head as high as a giraffe. Here we are. What a crowd!"

It was not exactly an agreeable crowd for a lady to be in. There was too much jostling and pushing in the effort to reach the low entrance early enough to secure a good seat within, and the laughter and the remarks were too loud and too rude to be pleasant. Unity drew her hat a little lower over her flushed face and clung closely to her cousin's arm.

"You want a seat where we can see without being in a position to be seen very distinctly?" he questioned, in a low tone, when, by dint of mingled patience and elbowing,

he had succeeded in landing her safely within the outer tent—a dreary, not very well lighted place—where a sparse collection of animals looked stupidly out from their cages.

Una assented, and he drew her forward:

"We must go on at once, then, and find our places; the people are already pushing into the second tent. You are sure that you made no mistake to-day, Una?"

"Perfectly sure. I was not thinking of him until I saw him," she answered.

Lester said nothing more, but with the quick eye and skillful management of one accustomed to crowds scanned the tent, and, selecting the seat he deemed most suitable, pressed his way here and there through the slowly-moving throng until he reached it.

Whatever the exhibition that followed was to others, Unity had little appreciation of it. The glittering tinsel, the painted faces, the flying horses, were but a confused mingling of colors and shapes in which she watched anxiously for only one figure. The bursts of laughter at the clown's stale jokes, the murmurs of applause at some dextrous feat,

drew her attention here and there, but only to look for Reub. A keen and watchful eye alone would have recognized him in that light and in the dress he wore when he at last appeared—somewhat in the background, for Reub was not a prominent member of even the poor society which he had joined.

The trained dogs displayed their intelligence; the athletes and gymnasts lifted and hung, swung and clung, in the most astonishing positions; the animated bundle of paint and gauze sprang through hoops and alighted upon her horse as it dashed around the sawdust arena.

Unity saw it all, not as a display, but as Reub's companions and surroundings; and she shuddered as she pictured to herself the life it must be—the tiresome days and the nights that could be nothing but this over and over again. She began to wonder how she should succeed in seeing Reub, after all, and what she should say to him. Would he listen to her? and how strange it would seem for her to be trying to reason and persuade him into some other way! She had never done that with either of her brothers in all

her life. Reub was far more likely to be surprised than influenced by anything she could say, she whispered, sadly, to herself. And, alas! she could not urge him to go home: there was no welcome for him. Her eyes had followed his every movement here and there while she pondered, and at last he turned and met her gaze fully. Whether he really saw and recognized her she had not time to decide, for suddenly there was a cry, a fall, the slipping of a rope or the dropping of a plank, and instantly all was confusion. A murmur of horror ran along the rows of spectators. "Somebody's hurt," "Missed it and fell," "He's killed," passed from lip to lip as the people arose, pressing and crowding upon one another.

Lester turned a frightened face toward Unity, who was slow to arouse to an understanding of what had happened.

"Who is hurt? It wasn't— Oh, Lester!" as his shocked, pitying glance was at last comprehended. "Not Reub?"

"I fear so. I thought I saw— Don't be frightened, Una." He interrupted himself to draw her trembling hand within his arm

and hold it firmly there. "It was only a fall; not a bad one, perhaps."

The programme had been nearly given, and there was no effort to complete it. Lester drew Unity out of the throng as speedily as possible, and found a quiet place where she could stand for a few minutes unnoticed and unmolested.

"Wait here for a little until I can find where he is, and how," he said. "I won't be long."

Notwithstanding his promise, it seemed to Unity a weary time that she waited there in loneliness and terrible suspense—long enough to imagine horrors innumerable, and to wish many times that she had insisted upon going with him—before Lester returned.

"We cannot see him to-night, Una; I did all that I could, but it is impossible," he reported. "He is not dangerously hurt: I learned that; and they have taken him away to the hotel where the company stopped to-day, but I could not discover where it was. I will find him to-morrow if I have to search the city over, but we can do nothing to-night. You must go home now and try to be satis-

fied that he is not dangerously injured and will be well cared for."

"How did it happen?" Unity remembered to ask a little later, when she had reluctantly yielded to Lester's representation and they were slowly walking homeward.

"I do not know—" Lester hesitated. "They thought he was surprised by something or some one and thrown off his guard for a minute, one of the men said. Una, I do not believe you'd better tell Flora anything of this; it cannot do any good, and I think she would rather not know."

Una was not sure that she fully understood his meaning. Some reasons for the suggestion, however, she could comprehend very clearly; and after a troubled review of the subject, their expedition and its results, she concluded with a sigh:

"We ought never to have gone there. It was unwise, if nothing worse."

"Yes," Lester assented, quietly. "But we did not think of that in time, and it is useless to think of it at all now."

Flora was waiting for them—home a long time from her committee-meeting, she said—

and evidently somewhat surprised, though she did not directly remark upon it, at their long stay.

Una's utmost effort could not make her manner animated or her face other than pale and grave, and Flora noticed it wonderingly:

"You look more tired than refreshed by your evening's entertainment. I don't think it could have been very inspiriting. Where did you go?"

But Lester interposed promptly:

"She is not to tell you anything about it.—Don't answer any questions, Una. I have a right to a secret if I want one; and if we were not particularly successful in our choice to-night, we do not mean to publish our failure."

Flora laughed good-naturedly, and dropped the matter with the careless comment that whatever had been "lacking in quality must have been atoned for by quantity."

But for Unity that night there were excited, sleepless hours before she found the doubtful rest of rehearsing the whole scene in troubled dreams.

CHAPTER X.

APART FROM THE SAWDUST AND THE SPANGLES.

LESTER was out early the next morning, and Unity, sure of the errand upon which he had gone, found the time drag heavily while she tried to interest herself in Flora's plans.

The latter was proposing a shopping expedition when Lester returned. He whispered, as he passed his cousin,

"I have found him."

"It is only to match some silks," pursued Flora, quite unconscious of the aside, "but that is sometimes an arduous undertaking."

"And I want Una to go somewhere with me this forenoon," interposed Lester.

"You awakened to an appreciation of her society last evening, and mean to monopolize it," laughed Flora. "You can carry out your

plan upon some other occasion; she wants to go with me."

"No, please; not this time, Flora," said Unity, hurriedly. "I'd like to go with Lester to-day, if you don't mind."

Flora's blue eyes opened widely:

"Certainly not. Do as you choose, of course."

If the reply was slightly cool and constrained, Unity was too troubled and excited to notice it; but Lester was not, and he laughed softly—not his pleasantest laugh—as his cousin left the room.

"I did not see him or let him know of my presence. I simply found where he was and came back for you," Lester explained as they left the house. "You will not find him in very sumptuous quarters, Una, though I suppose the place is comfortable enough; and the house is respectable." He hailed a passing car, which proved to be crowded, and there was no opportunity for further conversation.

Unity's thoughts, however, were too busy to care for words, since Lester could not understand all her perplexities, doubts and

fears. She did not know with what reception she might meet; she could not determine what she should do or say; and so it was with no clearly defined plans that she at last reached the house—a rather shabby one in regard to paint and architecture, but apparently clean and well-ordered enough.

Lester made all necessary inquiries and arrangements without troubling Unity with any questions—a thoughtfulness for which she was grateful; and after a brief waiting they were shown to an upper room, where, in a rocking-chair by a window, sat Reub with bandaged head and arm in splints. When he turned his face toward them as they entered, his expression was a curious mingling of shame, sullenness and pain, but there was not the surprise his sister had expected.

So pale, wounded and forlorn did the poor fellow look, however, sitting there lonely and helpless that every other feeling was lost in pity, and Unity only exclaimed, tearfully,

"Oh, Reub, I am so sorry!"

"You ought to be: you're the cause of it all," he answered, gruffly. "If I hadn't all

of a sudden seen you there last night staring at me so, I shouldn't have slipped."

Lester turned and walked away to the most distant window to study a landscape of alleys and back-yards, while he left the two to themselves.

Unity's distressed face at this version of the accident appealed to Reub's better nature, though he was in no amiable mood, and he condescended to add:

"Well, I suppose you had a right to look if you wanted to, the same as anybody else who paid their money. I'm not killed, though I can't say it would have been a great loss to myself or to any one else if I had been. But I don't see how you came there—or here, either, for that matter."

"I've been here several weeks: I am visiting at uncle's," Unity explained.

Reub began a whistle of incredulous astonishment that ended in a half groan as a slight movement sent a twinge of pain through his arm.

"'Visiting'! Things must have taken a new turn since I came away. There was little chance for going off on journeys then,

or for any other pleasure that other folks have, or I shouldn't have been here." He began the sentence sneeringly, but his voice dropped a little at the last.

Unity had taken a low seat beside his chair, and she looked up quickly into his face:

"Oh, Reub, I wish you had not gone away so! If you had only waited—"

Reub moved uneasily, and was again reminded of his condition by a dart of pain. The suffering probably added to the sharpness of his reply:

"Waited for what? I wish you had stayed at home yourself instead of coming here to surprise me with your white face and make me fall as I did. I'm in a pretty way now, cooped up here. The company went on without me this morning. They would have stopped longer if one of the elephants had been sick: men are cheap."

Reuben was certainly in a bitter mood. It occurred to Unity that he had not found himself or his wishes of much more consequence to his new acquaintances than they had been at home; but she wisely decided

not to comment upon that, and after a moment's silence asked if she could do anything to make him more comfortable.

"No; I don't see how you can. The doctor said he had done all he could, and that did not amount to much beyond setting my broken arm. If I hadn't lamed my ankle among all the other knocks and bruises, I could have gone on with the rest."

"You could not do anything if you were with them," suggested Unity.

"No, but it would be better than staying in this stupid place. They have my money, too—nearly all that I have earned for several months."

Unity's hand slipped into her pocket, and Reub laughed as he noticed the movement:

"Oh, I have a little—enough for now; I don't want any of yours. The millennium must be nearer than father calculates if John and Rhoda have given you anything to spare." But the movement had touched him a little, notwithstanding his roughness. He looked at his sister curiously: "I don't see what made you come here. It must have

been some trouble to hunt me up, and, as nearly as I could understand my last letter from home, no one there ever wanted to hear of me again. Father wasn't at all sparing of his woes and denunciations. What did you come for? Just to see if that fall really killed me?"

"Do you think I could have waited until this morning before I knew whether you were dangerously hurt or not?" asked Unity, reproachfully.

Reub laughed again, uneasily:

"I don't know any special reason why you should be overwhelmingly anxious. Father as good as told me he'd rather I'd been drowned in the river than alive and well where I was."

"I came because I wanted you to know that somebody did care for you—had cared all the time," said Unity, in a low voice. "I saw you on the street yesterday, and I went to that place last night only in the hope of seeing you. It was not the wisest way, but—"

"I should think not," interposed Reub; but the tone was gentler than the words.

He was glad to see a face from home again, though he would not acknowledge it even to himself. There were questions he would have liked to ask, but his sullen pride held them back.

"I thought if it had been different at home—if there had been somebody—you would not have gone away so. I wasn't much of a sister to you: I was so young and I didn't know; but I have understood better since," urged Unity, eagerly if not coherently. "And oh, Reub, I wanted to ask you to give up this kind of life. You do not really like it? I'm sure you can't."

"Well, I don't think it is as choice a lot as some fellows have: I'll own that." Reub's glance wandered from himself to Lester, standing at the distant window, and the sharp contrast once more stung him to bitterness. "I won't say it is what I would have chosen if I'd had a chance. I'm not altogether a fool. But I never had any chance—any choice. If father hadn't been so busy hunting up woes for the whole world that he hadn't any time to attend to his business or his children, we might have been like other

people. There was no reason why he shouldn't have done as well as his brother;" and again Reub's gaze rested upon Lester. "We look like cousins, don't we? He has a father."

"Oh, Reub, don't!" The tone shocked Unity. "Father may have made mistakes, but he never meant to wrong us; and he does care—more than you think. If you had seen how he looked when he thought you were drowned—"

"Yes. He was so rejoiced when he found I was alive!" sneered Reub. "His letter showed that."

"He was dreadfully grieved and angry when he learned what you had done," answered the sister, growing brave. "But, Reub, can you wonder? You know what he thinks of such a life as you are living, and you know yourself that it is neither a good nor a useful one. If you did not know it when you first began it, you do now; and you also know that you are ashamed of it."

"You are putting it pretty strong, I think," said Reub, looking at her in astonishment.

"You were not so much in the habit of speaking your mind—if you had any—when I was at home. John and Rhoda wouldn't have enjoyed it. What is the use of coming here and talking to me in this fashion? It's easy enough to say, 'Quit this,' but can you tell me what to do instead? I can't go home: you know that as well as I do; and I haven't been educated for anything. Besides, I'm not cheating or stealing, or anything else of the sort; and if you think my business is so very disgraceful, what did you hunt me up for? Why do you care so much?"

"Because you are my brother, and because— Oh, Reub, I do care. I wish I had understood it all earlier, and had felt as I do now; maybe I could have made home happier for you and Warren. I have learned some things, and I mean to be—I hope I am—a Christian." It was not easy to say those last words with Reub's eyes fixed upon her in that peculiar way. She knew so well what would be the association of ideas in his mind that she was prepared for the next remark:

"So father's wheels and signs have scared you at last, have they?"

"No, not that, but something else has won me. I wish you would read for yourself, Reub, and see—"

"No, thank you!" he interrupted, with emphatic haste. "All the results of Bible-reading I have so far seen haven't been of a kind to tempt me in that direction."

Unity tried to urge that there were other teachings than the mysterious prophecies which even yet she herself shrank from reading, poor child! She tried to tell him of the words of life and comfort, the plain directions and precious promises; but she had never been sufficiently well acquainted with this brother to talk freely with him, and she could not do it now. He was, moreover, in no mood to listen to her, and the interview was altogether an unsatisfactory one. Her remonstrances against the course he had chosen were useless, he said, since he could not help himself now, in any case; there was no other way open to him. He rejected the few offers she could make in the way of providing for his comfort. He

needed nothing more than he had or could get, unless she could make him sound and well again; he would thank anybody who would do that.

Yet it seemed to Unity's yearning heart so lonely and forlorn to leave him there helpless and alone that she lingered irresolutely at the doorway.

"I will come and see you again to-morrow," she said.

"Well!"

And with only that ungracious monosyllable the girl was obliged to depart, though very uncertain whether it expressed gratification at, or even toleration of, her proposed visit.

Except a few words on first entering and his brief "Good-bye" at last, Lester had not spoken while in the room, but a part of what passed he had unavoidably heard. He maintained decorous silence until they had passed through the halls and down into the street, and then he remarked explosively,

"Well, Flora thinks I'm something of a trial as a brother: I wonder how she would

like Reub by way of a change?" Then he looked at his cousin and added, half penitently, "I beg your pardon, Una; I couldn't help it."

"I know." Una smiled rather sadly. "Speaking of Flora," she said, wistfully, "I do not like keeping this a secret from her; it seems almost treacherous."

"It is a sort of treachery for which she would thank you," answered Lester, decidedly.

Unity sighed. She was hedged about in so many ways that she could do but little for her brother, even had he been willing that she should help him; and his own unwillingness was the greatest bar of all.

"If mother were at home—" began Lester, more with an idea of softening his last remark than because he had anything definite to say. But, whatever conclusion he had intended the sentence to bear, it was left unfinished as a tall, gentlemanly-looking person passed them, greeting Lester and bestowing an instant's keen scrutiny on his companion, with evident surprise at meeting them in that quarter of the city.

"That fellow back again already?" muttered Lester, scarcely waiting for the other to pass out of hearing.

Unity looked wonderingly up at him. She had wondered at his curt reply to the courteous salutation.

Lester's frowning brows relaxed a little at her glance, and he forced a laugh:

"Oh, he has a right to be in the city if he wants to; he certainly owns far more of its real estate than I do, and a large enough share in its interests. Only he has been away for a few weeks, and I hoped he would stay all summer. When he is in town I see far more of him than suits me. He is supposed to be a friend of the family."

"And you don't like him? A friend of your father, I suppose?" said Unity, too preoccupied with other thoughts to be deeply interested in her cousin's dislike of this passing stranger.

Lester laughed once more:

"Oh yes, of course! That is the way Flora introduces him—'A friend of papa's.' I don't believe the man ever was, or ever will be, a friend of anybody's except in

so far as he can make them serve some purpose of his own. He is entirely too intent upon carrying on his own projects, and in adding to his wealth without caring how, to be capable of any real friendship. Flora says he is very susceptible to good influences, but I happen to know that he is something a great deal more than susceptible to bad ones. He has money, though, and fine manners, and they cover any amount of evil that would be very visible in a poorer and less-cultured sinner."

It was late when they reached home, but they found Flora in too great perturbation to ask any troublesome questions about their expedition.

"I'm glad you have come; I am in such a worry!" she said, by way of greeting. "Hannah has gone away."

"Hannah! Gone where?" questioned Lester. "Have you inaugurated your new *régime* by sending her off the first day?"

"Of course I didn't." Flora's fair face was flushed, and she answered shortly. "Some of her people were sick—a sister,

I believe—and they sent for her. It seems to me that they might have found some one else to take care of her without sending for Hannah; but she thought she must go at once. It is very provoking."

"As Hannah doesn't belong to a mission school, she has no business with sick relatives, and they have no right to need looking after," commented Lester, meaningly. Then, as the flush on his sister's face deepened, he hastened to add: "However, I don't think the house will come to destruction while she is gone. Girls are plenty; we can find some one else to come and stay for a week or two."

"That is all you know about it," replied Flora, loftily. "There are plenty of girls, certainly, but few of them that we would want in the house. There are not many like Hannah.—There has been a large basket of cherries sent home for canning this morning, too," she added, turning away from her brother to Unity, as to one with sufficient comprehension of the case to sympathize. "I really do not know what we shall do."

"Why, we will can them," said Unity, promptly. "I know how."

"And there is no dinner cooked, either," pursued Flora, reviewing the whole deplorable state of affairs.

"We will cook it, then," declared Unity, cheerily. This sudden emergency was good for her: it gave her something to do and forced her thoughts into a new channel, and she brightened at once.—"What is there for dinner?" she asked, when she had hastily changed her street-dress and donned a neat little apron which she had scarcely dared to show until now.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Flora, still despondently. "Hannah said something about the vegetables, and a chicken that either did or did not come, and some steak to be broiled. She was in such a hurry that she scarcely told anything straight. She said there was pie: I remember that."

"Then we are sure of something to end on if we can only raise something to begin with," laughed Lester. "I suppose we can find the available material on hand by inspecting the premises." He and Unity in-

stituted a search, and a dinner was soon in course of preparation, with Unity installed as cook.

Flora undertook to set the table—a task which she accomplished with so many omissions that the meal was eaten "after the manner of jumping-jacks," Lester declared, as one or another of the trio was constantly running after missing articles. They grew very merry over the performance, however, and enjoyed the dinner unusually.

Even Flora's spirits revived, and she began to look more hopefully forward to the afternoon's labors.

"What a treasure you are, Una!" she said, gratefully.—"Don't go away this afternoon if you can help it, Lester. Somebody may come; and if we are both deep in those cherries—"

"I intend he shall be deep in them too, if he stays," said Unity.—"You can make yourself very useful with the cherry-pitter, sir."

It was a pleasant kitchen. Hannah had left it in respectable order, and the sun shone into it brightly that afternoon. The

three in unaccustomed possession of it laughed and chatted over their novel work —novel to at least two of them—and Unity worked, explained and directed, laughing to herself now and then as she wondered what Rhoda would think of a household so incompetent that even she—Unity—was considered a marvel of capacity in it.

The seeding and the canning were going on finely when the door-bell rang. Lester, with one of Hannah's aprons thrown over his knees and the cuffs he had forgotten to remove plentifully decorated with cherry-juice, looked up in dismay.

Flora laughed:

"I'll go myself; I am not such a picture as you are." She shook out the dainty dress that she had carefully protected, glanced at her hair in the tiny mirror and vanished up the stairs.

A moment later the two in the kitchen heard the faint murmur of voices in the room above; and when the minutes had lengthened into half an hour, there came the sound of the piano.

"Well, that is cool!" commented Lester,

in some astonishment. "I think she might have explained the situation and postponed a concert."

It was not cool in the kitchen, as the fire in the range was kept up to the requisite heat for the fruit that boiled and bubbled while Unity carefully watched and attended to it. She missed Flora's aid, such as it was, and disliked taking the entire responsibility; for Lester answered her inquiries as to whether they liked their cherries simply stewed or partly preserved with a blissful masculine uncertainty:

"Yes—I don't know. What is the difference? I thought everybody did such things alike. If there are two ways, do them your way; that is likely to be just as good as any."

Unity's way it had to be; for, though she momentarily expected her cousin's return, two full hours had elapsed, the last of the fruit was safely canned, and Unity, flushed and heated, was putting away the cooking-utensils, when Flora tripped into the room again:

"All through? How nice they look! It

was too bad to desert you so, but I couldn't well help it. Mr. Kinley came, and—"

"Humph!" interrupted Leslie. "If I had even thought of him, I'd have gone to the door myself. I think I could have prevented his making a very long call, or any call at all."

"He has been away for some weeks, and returned to the city only last evening." Flora pursued her explanation to Unity without seeming to notice her brother's remark. "Of course he had many things to tell and old friends to inquire for. He is an old acquaintance of papa's. I'm sorry to have left you so long alone, Una dear; but you have done beautifully, and I'm a thousand times obliged to you. Do come up stairs now and rest before tea-time. Dear me! I wish Hannah were back!—Lester, where shall we look for another girl?"

"You might have asked Mr. Kinley that question. I presume there are enough poorly-paid girls working for his shops who would be glad to exchange for fair wages in a respectable kitchen," suggested Lester, maliciously.

It was not a practical suggestion, and Flora ignored both it and the speaker as she drew Una away:

"Do come up stairs and rest. You shall lie on the lounge, and I have the prettiest little sketch to read to you."

"The idea of lying down to rest after that bit of work!" laughed Unity. "Rhoda would be horrified. We will hear the sketch, though, won't we?—Come, Lester," she called to her colaborer.

The cloud passed, and the three spent the next hour amicably together; but Unity found her thoughts wandering even from the interesting reading to wonder why Flora's influence, so potent with others, seemed to weigh so lightly with her own brother. Then her mind strayed to another brother and the influences which had shaped his life. Poor Reub! What could she do for him? She began to consider uneasily, too, that in the present state of domestic affairs at her uncle's it would be difficult for her to see him. Flora was so dependent upon her assistance that she could not easily be spared. Certainly it could not be accom-

plished without inquiries which would involve a full explanation. But all anxious planning upon that point was ended the next morning when a shabby-looking boy brought a note informing her that Reub had gone. Two of the company had returned for him, and, as the surgeon who attended him had decided that his injuries were not such as to render removal really dangerous, they had determined to risk the inconvenience, and had made arrangements for his traveling.

"I thought I'd let you know, so you need not come away out here again," Reub had written, hastily. "Maybe I did care more about your taking so much trouble for me than I showed, Unity. Anyhow, I know it was kind of you to want to show me that all my folks had not cast me off; I've sense enough to understand that. But, you see, it's no use trying to make me into something different. There's nothing I can do, and no chance for me; and I'd rather go on with the fellows than to stay moping here. Don't worry about it, though; it isn't worth while."

Neither the carelessly scrawled missive

nor the seedy messenger met Flora's eyes. Unity herself had seen the boy on the steps, and he had thrust the note into her hand and hurried away, as if glad that a disagreeable duty were accomplished. She had therefore no opportunity to gain further intelligence than Reub himself had communicated. Later in the day Lester visited the hotel, but the people there only corroborated the tidings of his departure, without being able to tell where he had gone.

Unity was sadly troubled.

"I don't know what I could have done for him if he had stayed, but I hoped I could do something," she said.

Lester looked at her, at a loss for any words of comfort.

"Do you believe in Providence?" he asked.

"Why, yes, I suppose I do," Unity answered, slowly. The thought of a tender, watchful Love ruling over all her life's little daily events was still so new to her that she was only just beginning to recognize it. "Don't you?"

"Because, if you do," continued Lester, passing by the question, "you must believe

that this wasn't any mere accident or happening, but that God took the work out of your hands; and so you need not worry because you could not do it."

Unity carried the thought still farther. God, who knew how much this work needed to be done, could give it to fitter hands than hers; and she prayed for Reub with stronger faith than she had known before.

Meanwhile, as the days passed, there was work enough for Unity to do. Hannah did not return, and Lester's visits to the intelligence offices did not furnish any one who was at once competent and willing to supply a temporary demand.

"The good ones want a place where they can stay, and the poor ones we don't want even for two or three days," he reported.

Flora was in distress because she had invited the young people's mission band to meet at her home that week, and the customary tea must be furnished. It was now too late to have any other place of meeting appointed, and what could be done? She looked appealingly at Unity, and Unity, glad to help in any of Flora's grand work, ques-

tioned what would be required, and thought they could manage it themselves.

"Do you?" Flora's eyes brightened. "I never should dare undertake it alone; but if you think we can do it, everything will be right, I am sure. You know so much about such things! I wanted the band to meet here particularly on your account, Una; I thought you would enjoy it."

It was not unmixed enjoyment, however, for Flora had so many little things to attend to, and so many interruptions from callers, that the burden of the preparatory work fell upon Unity, and even during the important afternoon itself she saw far more of the kitchen than of the parlor above, where gay voices were chatting while skillful fingers worked on the articles for the mission boxes. She was introduced to Flora's friends, indeed, in her flying visits to the upper rooms, but she fancied many of them were no wiser than the one whom she overheard remark to a companion:

"How nice it is for Flora to have a young cousin living near who can run in and help her in an emergency!"

The tea was a success: the whole afternoon had been one, Flora declared, in a gratified tone, when it was over:

"It was too bad that it kept you busy down stairs so much of the time, though. I would have insisted upon changing places with you—I did so want you to enjoy some of the pleasant conversation and the reading of those letters—but I knew I should be perfectly useless down here alone."

That last was certainly true, but, even while she assented, Unity secretly wondered how long it would be, at the present rate of progress, before Flora could be anything else. She was heartily glad when her aunt returned, and was followed a few days later by Hannah, so that household affairs could assume their normal condition, and her cousin could once more comfortably pursue the course she liked best.

"Only it does seem to me, Flora," remonstrated Mrs. Dodge, when three rather lonely afternoons had succeeded one another, and a fourth, with a headache for a companion, did not look inviting, "that you might stay at home a little more. It cannot be absolutely

necessary for you to attend to so many things."

"I know, mamma, it does appear just so at a glance—as if there could not be much harm in neglecting these meetings occasionally," admitted Flora, sweetly; "but it is one of the beginnings of evil, and I think we ought to train ourselves to be very quick to detect wrong anywhere."

"Except in Flora Dodge," suggested Lester, quietly.

CHAPTER XI.

NOT ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN.

NOT so many of the city fashions as Rhoda had hoped, but countless new thoughts and plans, Unity brought home with her when her visit, protracted beyond its first intent, finally ended. There were so many things she wanted to do, so much work that ought to be done, that she was eager to begin. Yet the beginning was a difficult matter.

Rhoda was surprised at the promptness with which her sister-in-law despatched her share of the work on the first Sunday after her return—Sunday was usually a day of rather leisurely doing at the farmhouse—and made ready for church.

"I don't believe John'll want to take out the light wagon. There's a bolt broken, and he said it oughtn't to be used again until he had time to mend it," she remarked.

"Never mind; I can walk," Unity answered, pleasantly. "I mean to grow accustomed to walking."

The country church, with its plain congregation, was very unlike the one she had lately attended, but that mattered little. The words of life were the same, the gray-haired old pastor spoke of the same gracious Master and Lord, and the heart of the young listener thrilled to a more tender love, a deeper earnestness, as she sat there. She stayed to the Sunday-school that followed, hoping to find some class that she could enter, but there seemed to be none; and while she lingered, waiting and disappointed, the superintendent came to her. He was a slow, unpretending man, possessed of sincere piety, the best of intentions and very little executive ability. He conducted the school as he did his small store, pursuing the same dull, simple routine week after week without a thought of variation:

"Won't you take a class, Miss— Miss Dodge, I believe it is? I thought I knew you, though we haven't seen you here very often," he continued, as Unity acknowledged

her name. "Glad to see you to-day. Won't you take a class? There's a class of boys over there that needs a teacher right bad."

"Oh, I don't think— I have never taught— I don't think I could," stammered Unity, thrown into utter discomfiture by the unexpected request. "I hoped to go into a class where I could be a learner myself. I would be willing to help if I were fitted for it, but I know so little yet."

"Well, there don't seem to be any such class. Some Bible classes would be a good thing if we could get them rightly started," admitted the superintendent, surveying his domain. "But the fact is, it's pretty hard work now to get teachers enough for the classes we have." He looked over at the wriggling, uneasy boys and back at Unity again. "Guess you'd better try it, hadn't you? It isn't very hard—just sort of keep them in order, you know, hear the verses and tell them what the lesson means. Sow a little of the good seed," he explained, confidentially.

Unity, looking at his rugged, earnest, perplexed face, and seeing that he was really at

a loss to provide for the class, reluctantly yielded. Notwithstanding the superintendent's statement of the simplicity of the undertaking, it had its difficulties, as she soon discovered. The boys were far more at ease than she in the new relation.

"I do not know much about this school," she said, trying to speak naturally. "I have been away for some time, too, so you must tell me what you do."

"Sayversesandcatechismquestions," answered one of the urchins, without taking the trouble to separate his remark into words and punctuating it with a yawn.

It required a moment's study to understand the observation.

"Bible verses? and catechism?" Unity questioned. "We will have those first, then. —How many know any to repeat?"

Four of the half dozen avowed their ability, but the knowledge appeared to be involved in a mist of uncertainty, and the recitation required much prompting. Moreover, while the boy at the head of the class was struggling through his partially-committed texts, the boy at the lower end was busily engaged

in catching flies and imprisoning them in the hymn-book box. When the lower boy was called upon to recite the one at the head compared marbles with the classmate next him, and the boy in the middle of the row occupied his leisure minutes in making paper wads.

Unity despairingly looked along the line. This might be the regular routine, but it certainly was not the way of "keeping them in good order." She resolved upon an innovation:

"I think we will let the verses go for this time and study something that will interest all of us at once," she said.

While the teacher was turning to the lesson for the day, one of the small boys, with a view to gratifying his curiosity and at the same time saying something eminently proper, inquired:

"Say! does your father know when the world'll come to an end? Somebody said he did."

"I do not think any one can know that," she answered, quietly, though flushing a little. "Jesus did not tell us when it would

be, but he told us what we must do and how we must live to be ready for it. For the world may end for us, you know—our life in it may end—any minute. This is one of the chapters that tell us about it."

After all, the awkward inquiry made an auspicious opening for the lesson; and by pursuing it in the form of mingled narrative and questions she managed to hold their attention—in a measure, at least—and might have done so still more successfully but for having the half hour intersected by the visits of the young man who collected the missionary pennies, the boy who distributed papers and the man who wanted to know what had become of a book missing from the library.

Had this really been sowing "good seed"? Unity wondered as she turned away for the closing hymn.

"Are you going to teach this class all the time?" asked one of the boys, adding, with gracious condescension, "'Cause we'd as lief have you as anybody, far as I know. We ain't very particular."

The superintendent was particular. He

was very anxious that Miss Dodge should keep the class, and strongly urged his plea when the school had ended:

"You, see, we need you."

"I have had no experience. If I thought I could do it—" Unity half consented. "But, Mr. Graves, couldn't there be some better way of taking the collections and of arranging about books?" and she began to tell him what she had seen elsewhere.

"Well, yes, I suppose likely there are better plans for some things," the old gentleman admitted, slowly. "But this isn't a city church, you see; we don't have all the material. And then folks here sort of hang on to old ways. You haven't been here long enough yet to know just how it is."

Unity flushed. How absurd, not to say conceited, she must appear in proposing changes and improvements the very first day she entered the school! She had not thought of that in her eager projects, but she made no further suggestions and prudently resolved to watch and wait for a little while.

On the whole, thinking it over on her homeward way, she was not really dissatisfied with her day's experience, nor discouraged about the class of boys so unexpectedly placed in her care. She was making busy plans for them as she walked slowly along the shaded road, when her eyes fell upon another boy, playing with a small dog in the grass that fringed the way. So soiled and unkempt he was, with clothing the worse for several rents, that he attracted her closer attention and suggested the children she had met in the streets of the city when she went with her cousin on some errand connected with her mission work. She knew what Flora would do in such an encounter as this, and remembered her saying, "You will always think to speak to such ones after this."

"You have not been to Sunday-school today, have you?" Unity asked, rather timidly; for the work was new to her.

"No'm," answered the boy, indifferently.

"Why don't you go?"

"Can't. Hain't got any clothes. Mar's sick." He was about the age of the boys in her own class. Perhaps a little effort might

bring him into it and induce him to come regularly.

"Where does your mother live?" Unity asked, carefully noting in her mind the directions given and determining to find the place the next day.

The next day was a hard one. Rhoda generally contrived that washing-days should be hard, being one of those persons who consider it clear gain always to add to work enough a little more that "might as well be done while we are at it." So it was late in the afternoon before everything was out of the way and Baby so soundly asleep as to promise a little leisure in that direction.

Unity was very tired and longed to enjoy the precious bit of time with a book in the depths of the old rocking-chair, but she bravely said to herself, "If I am to do anything at all, it must be in just such odds and ends of time, and very often when I am tired;" so she adhered to her resolution and set forth on the long walk.

The place was easily found, but Unity, shrinking a little from her errand, approached it slowly, and paused a moment on the

steps to gain courage for her opening remark. No time was allowed, however, for the door was suddenly thrown open without waiting for her knock, and a woman with a baby in her arms greeted her with a disagreeable stare of inquiry.

"Mrs. Green?" said Unity, interrogatively.

"Yes'm; that's my name." The tone suggested that the owner of the name expected to be contradicted and was willing to maintain her assertion by force of arms.

"I met your little boy as I was coming from church yesterday," began the visitor, "and I thought—"

"Yes'm; so he told me," interrupted the woman, her black eyes snapping as she so held the door that it precluded even the suspicion of a welcome to enter. "And I think that some folks had better 'tend to their own affairs and let other folks's alone. If Johnny has been kept home for two Sundays—partly because I wanted him to 'tend Baby and partly 'count of being sick with neuralagy myself, so I hadn't time nor strength to mend his clothes and fix him up—it ain't no great things. Land knows

he goes reg'lar enough most of the time, as I should think you might have seen if you'd been there yourself. Mebby you wasn't. I try to do my duty by my children, I do, and we ain't beggars nor heathens, and don't need anybody to come round and look after us."

"I beg your pardon," murmured the abashed Unity as soon as she could find an opportunity to speak. "I meant nothing but kindness, and I misunderstood your little boy. I thought you were sick, and that perhaps I could help—"

"Well, I don't need no help, thank you," interposed the woman again, in no wise mollified. "You are that Dodge girl, ain't you? Well, I guess your folks ain't so dreadful particular about going to church themselves that they need worry about any one else staying away a couple of Sundays. If they are, they've got so lately. Mebby I'd better call round to your house and ask 'em why they don't go?" and she closed the door with a bang.

Astonished, mortified and indignant, Unity turned away. All her long walk and kindly

purposes to end in such treatment as this! After she had gone a few yards, however, her flushed face cooled and she laughed. The boy had not told her that he was not in the habit of attending Sunday-school, she recollected; she had only taken that for granted. Perhaps some one would do well to call on the members of her own family, as Mrs. Green had suggested: certainly she had not thought of beginning her missionary labors there. It was evident that her country home was not the city, and that precisely Flora's methods would not answer here; and, somewhat wiser, but exceedingly perplexed, she pursued the remainder of her walk.

A few weeks after her return, however, Unity one day saw in one of the village papers, among a variety of items gathered from abroad, notice that a certain circus company would tarry for a time at a town in a neighboring State, awaiting the repair of cages and wagons which had suffered in a late railroad accident. The paragraph would have meant nothing to any other member of the family, but Unity recognized

the name as that of the company in which she had found Reub, and she seized the opportunity afforded by this first clue to his whereabouts to write to him at once, enclosing her letter to the manager of the company. Day after day passed without an answer, until so long a time had elapsed that she had abandoned all hope of hearing from it, when there arrived a packet which proved to be her own letter enclosed in a note, not easy to decipher, from some one in charge of the company:

"There was a young man named Reuben Dodge with us for a while—was here before I took the company, I believe—but he was hurt in a fall several months ago, and before he got well a brother or uncle, or some relation, sent for him and took him away. Never heard from him afterward, and don't know where he is."

That was all Unity obtained after much study. There was some mistake about it. Poor Reub had no brother or uncle to help him, and the writer had probably confounded him with some one else who had been in his employ. Only one thing seemed certain—

that he had left the company and for her all trace of him was lost. She did not tell any one what she had learned; she had not told of meeting Reub in the city: there was no one who she felt quite sure would care; but the thought of Reub burdened her heart through many a stormy night that winter, and a vision of him as a hungry, shelterless wanderer haunted her many a time as she sat at the well-filled table. There was nothing she could do for him but to pray and wait.

But the girl's regrets for the past years, together with some practical reflections awakened by Mrs. Green's unpleasant remark, aroused her to new thoughts concerning her influence at home. The daily life there seemed soon to have drawn her into its current as of old, and to be flowing on very much as it had done before she went away. Not quite, however, for Rhoda could not rid herself of an impression, acquired she scarcely knew when or why, that this was not exactly the Unity she had known in the past.

"It is not that she has grown stylish or

cityfied or is trying to put on any new airs and graces," she mused, secretly watching her young sister-in-law, "but some way she is different."

The undefinable change somewhat troubled Rhoda. It irritated her because she could not understand it, yet involuntarily she yielded a new respect to the new look that she sometimes met in Unity's eyes, to the new tone in her voice—quieter and gentler, if possible, than ever before, but more determined also, as if her life had found some new purpose and meaning and outward events were treated with reference to it, all speech and action shaped by it. Even more considerate and obliging than of old was Unity; yet it was not now because she had no opinions, nor because she feared, upon sufficient occasion, to express them. Rhoda had more help in her plans than ever before, but she had also a secret consciousness that she no longer ruled.

"I don't see," said Rhoda, half impatiently, as she was trimming the lamps one morning, "what notion has taken your father lately. He used to be satisfied with one

lamp in his room, but for some months now he thinks he must have two. He complains that the oil must be poor, but I don't see but it is as good as ever it was. We pay as much for it; and more too, now that he burns so much. You'd better set those lamps with the small burners forward on the shelf, Unity, so that he'll take them instead of the larger ones. He turns on such a blaze that it burns out the oil dreadfully, any way. Those will do him just as well if he doesn't notice when he takes them. It is only a notion of his that he wants two."

"It is probably a notion that he wants more light, though, instead of more lamps," answered Unity, smiling, but quietly disregarding the instructions.

Rhoda frowned as she saw her arrange the lamps in the usual order. For a moment she thought she would change them herself; then she glanced at Unity again, and, for some reason not clearly defined even in her own mind, decided to let them alone. But it was this sense of not being monarch of all she surveyed which, when John remarked that evening, "Well, I don't know as that

visit in town did Unity any hurt, after all. You were afraid it would, but she seems to have come back just what she was before," made her answer rather tartly:

"Maybe she is, and maybe she isn't. She doesn't appear the same to me; she is more like Flora—only she isn't like her, either. I'm tired of trying to make it out, but I don't think it did her any great good."

Unconscious of the watchfulness, unconscious that there was in herself any sufficiently apparent change to cause it, Unity went on her daily way, trying to be patient and interested in many things that were tiresome and distasteful, trying to do "heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men" whatever she did, yet often sorely dissatisfied and troubled because she could not make her life into what it seemed to her it ought to be. Flora, who had first won her to see the "beauty of holiness," stood always before her as her ideal of Christian loveliness and usefulness. It was the Master's work that Flora was doing, and surely that ought to be done here as well as there; but the failure in finding it or in making it what she

thought it ought to be perplexed and discouraged her. She had grown greatly interested in her class of boys, and they were becoming attached to her also; but she could not talk with them nor manage them as her cousin did her class. They came to her with no such questions and problems, and she distrusted her own methods and success, such as they were. Her first interview with the superintendent and her call upon Mrs. Green had not been her only futile efforts; and at last, one day, in one of her deepest moods of discouragement, she met the gray-haired old pastor and poured out to him the story of her troubles and bewilderments. It marked a decided growth in herself that she dared to talk to him at all, and still more that she cared to talk to him upon such a subject; but she did not think of that. He listened to her very quietly—so quietly that she began to wonder whether he were listening at all—and then suddenly turned upon her with the question:

"My child, did you ever read the account of St. Paul's conversion?"

"Yes, sir," answered Unity, in surprise.

"Well, did you ever notice that after the light flashed upon him and the wonderful voice had called him, he did not say, 'Now I will arise and go and work like Peter and John'? He said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?' And he never was set at Peter's work, nor John's, either; he did not live their life, nor die their death. I do not doubt that your cousin's life and her work are beautiful and useful: I am glad to hear of it, as I am glad to hear of any one anywhere who is a loyal subject to our King; but if the Lord had wanted only Flora's work, he would have called only her; and he has called *you*. Don't make a mistake, my child. Christ is the only perfect Pattern, and he never says to any of us, 'Follow this one,' or 'Follow that one,' but to each one of us, personally, 'Follow thou me.'"

If even yet Unity did not fully comprehend the truth he would have taught her, at least his words helped to turn her steps in the right direction.

CHAPTER XII.

"AS WHEN A STANDARD-BEARER FAINTETH."

FLORA'S letters had not given all the help Unity had expected from them. Possibly no letters could have done so, since the wisdom of others can be neither proffered nor accepted with the confidence with which we secure ready-made clothing—certain measurements given and a fit guaranteed. But during the latter part of the winter and through the spring Flora's letters were suggestive of a mind preoccupied. They were shorter, she spoke of being very busy—though the business seemed to consist in going about a great deal—and she often forgot to answer Unity's questions. But one early May day came a missive that explained. Flora was to be married in two or three weeks—the date had not yet been exactly settled because of a little uncertainty about the steamer they wished to take for

Europe—and Una must without fail come and remain with her until she went away.

"I suppose this announcement will not greatly surprise you," Flora wrote, "after what you saw and heard while here (though you did not become very well acquainted with Mr. Kinley, I believe) and the hints my letters have contained. But congratulations sent by mail will not answer me, Una dear: I want your own loving self. I have so many things to tell you that I have neither time nor words to write, and I cannot do without you. You are almost my sister, and I must have you with me for the little time longer I remain at home. Now, don't think of any objections, dear. I have written to Uncle Dodge about it—or rather mamma has done so, which will be more effectual—and we all expect you."

The letter dropped from Unity's hands and for a few minutes lay unnoticed in her lap with its closing sentences unread. Surprise scarcely expressed her astonishment, almost her consternation. She had not even dreamed of this, whatever Flora had imagined concerning her knowledge. Mr. Kinley,

the man whom Lester so disliked and despised, whom he openly called selfish, avaricious and dishonest, to win Flora, whose hopes and aspirations were so pure and high, whose whole life was upon so lofty a plane! So incredible did the intelligence appear that Unity could not have given it credence upon anything less than her cousin's own word; and, with that before her, she sat in silent amazement.

But presently the apparent impossibility of it all suggested a new thought: Mr. Kinley might have greatly changed in his views and life since the few occasions Una had had of becoming acquainted with him. What might not Flora's potent influence and all the charm of her beautiful example have wrought? Drawn first by love of her to attend the services she frequented, and then impressed and convinced by what he heard there, why should he not have changed and a new and sacred bond of sympathy have taken the place of the old friendship which Flora could have cherished only in the hope of doing him good?

A long breath of relief followed this

suggestion, and Unity smiled at her own stupidity in not sooner reaching so natural a solution of the problem. Doubtless this whole story was among the many things Flora wanted to tell her. There was still a little pain at the thought that, in a certain sense, she must lose Flora. They could not be to each other quite what they had been in the old girlish days, but she could still rejoice in her cousin's joy; and she longed to go to her. She doubted, however, whether that would not be considered unreasonable, if not impossible, by other members of the family less interested.

Dr. Dodge came down to dinner that day with some of the old scornful fire in his eyes, seldom seen there of late. Mrs. Dodge's letter had proved effectual, though in a manner different from that which she had intended.

"Your aunt wants you to come to Flora's wedding," he remarked, looking toward his daughter. "She pays a variety of compliments and says a great many kind things, and then very delicately proposes to pay your expenses. It is done up in all the new-

fangled ruffles and fringes of words, but the long and the short of it is she thinks I'm too poor to send you, I suppose. Tom's folks have always lived in all the style and fashion and nonsense of the age, and they have no idea that anybody else could refuse to do the same except on account of poverty. They can't appreciate such a motive as common sense. I think I can show my lady sister-in-law that I am able to pay a few dollars for traveling expenses, even if I have not chosen to rig up my house with a cupola and a mortgage on top. Let me know what you need, Unity, and you shall have it."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. John, forestalling Unity's delighted thanks; "I wouldn't take so much trouble to convince her. If Unity doesn't go, she will know she isn't so short of money as to want hers."

"Unity is going," interposed the old doctor, decidedly, "unless she says she does not want to go."

Which Unity did not say. She looked up with a radiant face which all Rhoda's after reflections and comments could not cloud.

"Because a girl doesn't come out in all

the frippery and nonsense that most young simpletons wear, they think she cannot afford to have any pleasures at all, I suppose. Well!"

The doctor dismissed the subject with that last contemptuous ejaculation; and when, two or three days later, Unity timidly went to him with a statement of the articles required and the sum that would be needed—a very modest one she had made it—she found it difficult to arouse him to any remembrance of the occurrence. He looked up dreamily:

"Your cousin Flora's wedding? My dear child, I did not know she was married."

But Rhoda, in her vexation at the whole project, proved an unintentional but effective ally:

"Well, I shouldn't have supposed you'd forget Mrs. Dodge's letter so soon, if you cared so much about it as to think it worth while for Unity to go on that account. I never thought it was any use to notice it, for my part."

"Letter? Mrs. Dodge?" The doctor's

bewildered brow slowly cleared. "Yes, yes! I recollect.—What was it you said you wanted, child?"

Rhoda closed the door with considerable emphasis, as the baby's crying called her away; and Unity, with flushed cheeks, repeated her statement. She would not herself have reawakened in her father's mind the prejudice that she could not but feel was an unjust one, and she was sorry and somewhat ashamed to feel that her unexpected indulgence was due even in part to such a motive. But she well knew how useless it would be to attempt to explain; so she only accepted with quiet thanks the money placed in her hand.

"But you did not mean to give me this, father?" she asked, pausing as she smoothed out the bills in her lap and held up one of them. "It is a ten instead of a one."

"Is it? Let me see." He took the note and carried it to the window, turning it one way and another and scrutinizing it carefully. "So it is. This room is so dark I can scarcely see in it any more except by sitting close to the window. And

we have had so many cloudy and gloomy days lately."

Unity looked up in momentary surprise. She thought it had been a week of remarkably bright sunshine, but she reflected how unlikely it was that her father should remember from one day to another what the weather had been. As she went away to her own room with the little roll of money in her hand, she wondered whether she were really selfish in determining upon this visit, which was so evidently viewed with dissatisfaction by Rhoda.

"True, I was away only last year, but that has been the only time in all my life, and since Rhoda came here she has been several times to see her people," she reasoned. "It is the last opportunity I shall have of visiting Flora in her old home, and probably I shall never go again. If I can be with her now and hear all about it from herself, I shall know so much more of what her new life is to be than letters can ever tell me."

But the long talk that followed Unity's arrival was scarcely what she had expected.

It seemed natural enough now that Lester should meet her at the station; but Lester was in a decidedly cynical mood, and from almost his first words it was evident that his dislike for his prospective brother-in-law had in no wise diminished.

"So you have really come to the 'Great Clearing-Out Sale,' have you?" he asked, then colored under her glance. "I beg your pardon, Una. I suppose it is abominable to talk in that style, but I have been too cross to be particularly choice in my words for the last week—since this thing has been definitely settled. You know of my admiration for Mr. Kinley."

"But I hoped you would have reason to think differently of him by this time?" Unity half questioned, with eager voice and eyes.

"Well, I haven't. And this whole arrangement seems to me such an exceedingly worldly-wise bargain that I begin to think money can buy anything."

"It could not buy Flora," answered Unity, decidedly.

"Oh, I do Flo the justice to believe she

Unity visits the city again. Page 268.

has persuaded herself that she cares for him, and that he has a great many fine qualities, and all that sort of thing. Nevertheless, if it had not been for the costly setting, I think she would have been very slow to discover any jewel in that locality. How she can do this, if she cares so much for some other things and thinks them so vital as she has always pretended, is beyond my comprehension. But I've given up trying to understand it."

"Uncle and aunt are satisfied with it? I supposed so, from aunt's letter," said Unity.

Lester looked at her with a quick, short laugh:

"Did you stay so many weeks at our house without learning that whatever Flora does is right? Mr. Kinley is 'very susceptible to good influences,' you know. Living in this benighted land, he can but seldom have enjoyed them; but now he is to be brought under their constant pressure, and what may they not do for him? I verily believe Flora half deludes herself with the idea that she is entering upon a sort of

missionary work. You may think I have no right to speak in this way," he added, with a sudden change of tone, "but I have a right to care something for my only sister; and I do care a good deal for her—entirely too much to have any patience with such a marriage as this. But it's no use talking about it now."

Flora did not look like one to be commiserated when she met her cousin with a radiant face. A very bright face it was still, an hour or two later, when she had, as she said, "smuggled Una away from the rest for a good quiet talk" in the room they were to occupy together. She had much to tell of all their new plans and the prospects opening before her, of their trip to Europe and all the places they intended to visit:

"Just think of it, Una! All those wonderful places I have dreamed of so long! I can hardly make myself believe I am really to see them at last. We shall be away for six or eight months—possibly a year. A delightful year I do not doubt it will be. And yet do you know"—Flora leaned her head back against the cushions

of her chair and looked at her cousin with a tender softening of the bright blue eyes—"I can begin to imagine already that I shall be glad to get home again and take up my work once more?"

"Your home will be here?" questioned Unity.

"In the city? Yes. Mr. Kinley has a lovely place near the Park;" and Flora launched into praises of its beauty, its grounds, its drives and fountains, and then of the grand house with its beautiful rooms. "It will be very different, of course, from anything to which I have been accustomed. Not that I haven't always had everything comfortable," with a complacent glance around the pretty room, "but not like that. It will be new to me, Una, and wealth brings great responsibility," she added, with a gentle gravity stealing into her face and voice. "But how much good it may be made to accomplish!"

"In the right hands—in yours," assented Unity, eagerly; for in all this there had been nothing of what she most wished to hear, unless, indeed, this last sentence touched

upon it. "And Mr. Kinley will sympathize with you in such things, and help you?" A blundering question bluntly asked, it seemed to her; but at least her thought had found expression.

Flora understood it, and the fair brow clouded.

"Dear Una, can there be perfect happiness in this world?" she answered, gently. "You have touched upon the only spot that mars mine. In some ways Mr. Kinley is not all that I could wish. He is not a Christian, you know, and so he cannot feel as I do about many things. He has been unfortunately educated, but I hope his views will greatly change when he is really in a home of his own—when we are constantly together. He promises, of course, that I shall be entirely free to follow my own convictions; and, indeed, he says that I am the only link between him and those sacred things which are so much to me. Think of it, Una! What a sweet, awful responsibility! The only link!"

It was Flora who was speaking, but for Unity her words had suddenly lost their

weight. The sweet voice rippled on, but she scarcely heard the rest of its confidences. It sounded far off and more meaningless than the wind. How could two agree to walk together, when they were going in opposite directions? If love and faith and the Master's service were indeed, as they had always seemed, Flora's very life, how could she link that life with one who utterly disbelieved in and rejected them? If she really held these things to be of supreme importance, how could she have chosen for her dearest earthly friend, whose lot in life she would share, one who cared nothing for them? What part could he have in her brightest hopes, her deepest feelings, her most earnest purposes? And if he shared none of these, what attraction or tie had Flora found that she dignified by the name of "love," unless it were in truth the glittering one that Lester had suggested?

Unity's hands had dropped in her lap, and it was a grave, still face that she turned toward her cousin while she mentally tried to solve the tangled, painful problem. It was this same low, gentle voice that had

first taught her "all the words of this life." And was it not real to Flora herself, after all? or was it that the world and its treasures were so much more real and valuable to her than she had supposed?

"But you haven't manifested the least curiosity about my trousseau," laughed Flora. "A part of it has come home—not the dress yet, of course—and some beautiful presents have been sent in already. Isn't it nonsense to make such a fuss and buy such a quantity of things, as if there would never be a chance to make a purchase afterward? Come! I'll show them to you."

As Lester had said, it was "no use talking about it now," and Unity arose and followed Flora to the room where wardrobe and gifts were accumulating. She tried to praise the beauty that she would have been quick to discover under other circumstances, but her manner was so constrained that finally there dawned upon Flora an uncomfortable suspicion that Unity, in whom she had never before discovered a trace of the feeling, was really a little envious; and she quietly pushed aside a case Mr. Kinley had sent her

the day before, and charitably refrained from displaying its contents—a set of pearls and sapphires.

But Unity viewed all the display as, a little later, she viewed the bridal ceremony and its attendant splendors—with a sadly troubled heart. Even Flora's low, persuasive tones could not hush the voice of conscience or make her deaf to its honest verdict, and she had now nothing to say to Lester's comment:

"Oh yes, it is a beautiful arrangement! Mr. Kinley will make plenty of money by sharp practice and unscrupulous means, and Flo will spend a little of it in charity and think she is doing great good."

Unity was sad and weary with it all, and glad when it was over and she could go home. If she had not cared so much for Flora, had not deemed her so nearly perfect, she might still have felt surprise and disapproval; but now the disappointment was overwhelming. She was dismayed and bewildered.

"Well, if I were to judge from your looks, I should say you had been to a funeral rather

than to a wedding," was Rhoda's criticism the day after her return.

"And I feel so," Unity whispered to herself, though, beyond a faint smile, her lips made no reply. She could not force herself into any animated account of the occasion and its surroundings, yet she tried to do it to gratify her sister-in-law, who expected at least a full description as a compensation for the visit to which she had objected.

So miserable a failure was the effort that Rhoda was firmly established in her conviction that the trip had been useless—money thrown away.

"It doesn't seem to me that you know much more about it than you would have known if you had stayed here and only heard through letters," she said. "I thought you would bring home pieces of her dresses, anyhow, and it wouldn't have hurt them any to have sent some of the cake. I'll warrant, if I'd been there, I'd have known a little more about what was given her and what she wore. Why, child, what did you go for?"

The interest and the meaning—the new

meaning which had made it sweet—seemed to Unity suddenly to have gone out of her life. She had been trying to fashion her character after a beautiful model, and the model had all at once proved not worth imitating. Had it? She abruptly asked herself the question when that thought fully presented itself. What was it that she had been trying to do? She took up her Bible. The old sweet promises were still there; the Master was still worth following. Almost his voice seemed asking reproachfully, "Will ye also go away?" Laying her face on the book, she answered in Peter's words: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Yes, she was sure of that; and yet the one who first had induced her to listen to those words, who had told her of the love that would bless and gladden all her life and had taught her that all earthly treasures were as nothing compared with this friendship and service, had counted those same earthly treasures as of greater worth, and had eagerly snatched at them when they were within her grasp. She had given them the prominent place in the most

important choice of her life. Had Flora been so blinded and dazzled that she did not clearly see what she was doing, or had she never really believed what she had taught to others? Could she have felt and believed all these things and yet have chosen as she had?

Unity's brain as well as her heart ached with the perplexing questions that now in one form, now in another, so constantly repeated themselves. She could not banish them, she could not settle them; and she grew sadly wearied and worn. She had not parted with her faith, but she had lost heart and courage. Unconsciously she had been following a human guide, and her guide had failed her. Her lonely, hungry heart had so clung to Flora! all her life had seemed to bloom and brighten at the coming of this one friendship; and now she had lost it. Not that her cousin's manner had been less tender and affectionate through all that last visit, nor that letters written in the old endearing way were not still sent by her; but Unity felt that the Flora whom she had so trusted, so reverenced, was dead, or, worse,

had never existed. "To make idols and find them clay, and to bewail their worship—" It is an old story, but Unity did not know it. She could not put her sorrow far enough away from her to analyze it; she only knew that all her hopes and all her plans seemed to have grown dull and spiritless. She tried faithfully to do the duties that fell to her, but old occupations had lost their zest and labor its incentive.

Unity drooped so visibly that even Rhoda noticed it, though it was one of the few things she would have preferred not to notice. She placed her own construction upon it, and concerning its cause judged as correctly as it was in her nature to do.

"She's moping herself sick because Flora is married, that's all," she informed John. "It has been 'Dear Una' and 'Dear Flora' for these two or three years, and they have written long letters to each other, and have been as crazy to get each one as if it held a fortune; and now Flora has found somebody else that she cares more for, and Unity feels jealous and deserted. It is always the way with such red-hot friendships. I never

was romantic enough to have any of them myself, but I used to watch other girls. They always end that way. Unity'll soon forget it. What she needs is plenty of work to take up her mind."

Warren thought differently. He was home for a day or two, and at first he silently watched his sister's changed face and listless manner; then he spoke to John:

"What is the matter with Unity?"

"I don't know. Nothing, I guess. Rhoda thinks she's sort of fretting because Flora has married and gone away. She'll be all right when the spring work comes on."

"I don't think she has ever suffered from lack of work," said Warren, decidedly; and he seized the first opportunity to question Unity herself, doing it in his usual abrupt fashion: "You have changed since I was home last: what is wrong, Una?"

"I don't know—myself, I'm afraid," she answered, smiling faintly. Then the thought that had been slowly growing for weeks burst forth impetuously: "Oh, Warren, I'm so tired of it all! I don't know whether it

is wrong or not, but I wish I could go away somewhere—to school. I wish I could study to be a teacher."

"Well, why shouldn't you?" he said, slowly. "I never thought of it before, but I don't see why it might not be a good plan. You could be more independent. Of course this is your home, and you have a right here; but you might like other work better. And then— It stands this way, Una." He suddenly stopped commenting and began briefly to explain. "You have some share in the property here—no great amount, but there is something that will some day be yours. It has all been in John's hands, and he has done well enough with it; I've nothing to say against that. But if you are sure that by and by you would rather have an education than more money or something else of that sort, why you are old enough to know your own mind. I think John and Rhoda can be brought to agree to it; but if they won't, I'll help you myself. I could do it easy enough if it were not for—" He looked at her a moment, as if hesitating whether to complete the sentence; but she

asked no questions: she only said, with a grateful remembrance of the difference between now and earlier years,

"Oh, Warren, you are so good to me!"

"It is time somebody was," he answered, with a little quick laugh, a flush stealing over his brown cheek, as if he were slightly embarrassed by the unexpected remark. "I don't think our family, as a whole, have hurt themselves with taking care of one another."

"No." It seemed odd to be speaking of this to Warren, but she was glad to have an opportunity to do it. "I wish I had known about such things earlier. Maybe I might have helped—a little—to have made home pleasanter for you and poor Reub." She hesitated over the last words, and spoke them in a low tone.

Warren looked at her earnestly for a moment:

"Reub is—" Then he changed the sentence: "I think it was all that a little mite like you could do to make things tolerable for yourself—more than you could do, in fact. But about a school: I wish there was

one in Waynesdale, but there is not. How would Glenn University do?"

Warren was going straight forward in his determined way to plan out details before Unity could persuade herself to believe that the project was possible in any guise. He brought the matter promptly to a crisis by calmly remarking to his father at the table:

"Unity has been telling me that she wants to go away to school. What do you think of the Glenn University?"

No one of the party was more startled than Unity herself. The audacity of the proceeding seemed to her unparalleled, and for a few minutes she scarcely knew what passed around her, until she heard her father say in answer to some one,

"Well, if the child likes study, it is natural enough. I always loved books."

"If Una's work here is worth only her board and her clothing, I suppose you can easily get some one else to do it for the same," said Warren, apparently pursuing a discussion with his brother; "so you need suffer no loss by her going away."

"Yes; I suppose that is true," admitted John, brightening a little at that suggestion as he remembered how often Rhoda had complained of Unity's lack of strength and ability. "If she wants to use part of what's coming to her that way— Well, it's taking out ready money, and that's not easy to spare now. Still, it could be managed, a little at a time. I'm not saying it isn't fair enough, only—" He glanced doubtfully at his wife. Her black brows were contracted in an unmistakable frown. Whatever she might think of her young sister-in-law's ability, as compared with her own, to "turn off a day's work," she perfectly well knew that Unity's knowledge of the household routine, her interest and faithfulness in all that concerned it and her untiring devotion to little Jack could not be procured for money.

"She went to school in the village as long as she wanted to go there—at least, as long as it was any use for her to go there—and I don't see what more she needs," said Mrs. Rhoda, sharply. "It is very easy to talk about what share this one and that

one is entitled to now, since John has taken the place and made something of it. There'd have been little enough for anybody but for that."

"John has done well with the place, and we all owe him thanks for it. If we had not sense enough to see it when we were younger, we certainly can now," said Warren, with a quick glance at his brother.

It was the most unexpected remark Warren could have made, and John's look gradually changed from surprise to pleasure as he slowly comprehended. The commendation was only just. He had done well with the place; and if he had closely held all he made, and had been slow to consider the others in their wishes and their interests, it was because he was so intent upon his own, so desirous of making the most of everything within his grasp, rather than because of any intentional injustice. He had never an idea of defrauding his brothers and sister, but only of turning them to the best account, as he viewed it, while they were under his management, without cherishing the slightest doubt that his management would be as good

for them as for the farm. Warren could see all that more clearly now than in the days when he had been so fretted and chafed by opposition and restraint.

"But we could not all have done so well," Warren pursued, with an amicable glance at Rhoda, "and that some of us are better fitted for other work than farming doesn't need much proof. We are not so rich but that we shall all need to work in some way, and it is only fair that Una should have a chance for a better education if she wants it."

"No; I can't say but that's so—if in that way she wants to use a part of what'll belong to her, and if father is willing," admitted John, with a glance wandering questioningly from his wife to his father.

"No, no! I don't object," answered the old doctor, but with his head dropping on his hands, as if he were weary of objecting or consenting to most things in this world.

For the first time Unity noticed how gray the bowed head was growing—noticed, but did not think of it until afterward. There was some further discussion, but the question of her going to the university was settled, in-

credible as it seemed to her, in the affirmative.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said, gratefully, to Warren afterward. "Some way," looking up at him timidly, "I think you are different from what you used to be."

"I should hope so." He laughed a little. "I think you are different too. Suppose"—he hesitated a moment over the proposition —"that you and I write to each other after you are settled at Glenn and see if we can get better acquainted?"

"Will you?" said Unity, eagerly. "Oh, Warren, I'd be so glad!" Letters from her cousin had grown to seem natural enough, but she had never thought of writing to her brother, or that he would care to hear from her.

CHAPTER XIII.

LETTERS AND A TELEGRAM.

LETTERS were not set down in the curriculum at Glenn University, yet perhaps they constituted a more potent and valuable factor in Unity's education while there than any of the branches so named. She had dreaded the first plunge into her new life. Her girlhood had not fostered self-reliance, and she shrank from going alone among strangers to make all the necessary inquiries and arrangements; but she had not hoped to escape such an ordeal until, on the day of departure, Warren unexpectedly appeared and announced himself in readiness to accompany her. It occurred to her that day as she watched his modest, manly, straightforward manner when in conversation with some of the professors at the college, and afterward on their round in search of suitable lodgings, that this was a very agreeable

brother for a girl to own, and her heart thrilled with the first sisterly pride it had ever known.

By his careful inquiries and persistent effort, Unity at last found herself in very pleasant quarters and able to enter auspiciously upon her new work. She began it eagerly. Languor had vanished with the opening of this new vista, and strength and cheerfulness rapidly returned with the coming of fresh hopes and interests. She still mourned over Flora, but there was something definite for herself to do apart from the old mechanical round that had busied only her hands. She could not satisfactorily settle the problem of her cousin's course, but more profitable studies crowded it more and more out of her thoughts and allowed her mind to regain a healthful tone.

As soon as Unity was fairly settled in her course of studies and began to feel a sense of proprietorship in the quiet little room at the house where she boarded, she wrote to Warren. She began the correspondence timidly. Would he like to hear about this? Would he think it silly to write that? she

wondered. But after tearing up one or two rather stiff attempts, she grew desperate.

"It sounds as if it were copied from the *Complete Letter-Writer* that Rhoda always keeps on the parlor-table at home," she laughed, though with the tears coming to her eyes. "Oh dear! I'd like to tell somebody—somebody that would really care—about all the little things here. I believe I will write them to him just as if I expected him to be interested."

The answer surprised her. Warren found it easier to speak freely upon paper than face to face. There were many things he had wanted to say to some one—some one who knew all about the old life, and so could understand—of new hopes, ambitions and plans; and when once he began to write, he forgot all constraint and wrote more freely than he had expected or intended. His nature had been like an ice-bound stream, seemingly dull, cold and hard, simply because there had never been in his home sufficient sunshine of love to melt the surface crusts and reveal the currents beneath.

That letter was a revelation to Unity. From it she learned more of her brother's feelings and purposes, more of himself, than she had ever known before. She read it with grateful tears and a new sweet sense of wealth. At last she was "like other girls;" she had a brother who loved and cared for her. There was no trouble in replying. Warren's letter had opened a world of thoughts and questions. From that time the correspondence became regular, growing constantly more unreserved, tender and helpful.

It awoke Unity to new strength, endeavor and achievement. A woman is seldom ambitious except for love's sake. But that which she would never demand or aspire to for herself she will eagerly claim and win for her mother's daughter, her brother's sister, her husband's wife. God, "who setteth the solitary in families," knows us full well. Could the Master have offered surer inducement than "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother"?

So Unity's school-life prospered; and as

weeks passed into months they found her not only pursuing with steadily-increasing interest the paths opening before her, but also growing out of her timid, repressed dreamy girlhood into a more healthful and active life. The circle of school associates, the new society as well as new duties, wrought each their work. Nevertheless, as has been said, Warren's letters were an important factor in the change and improvement, since she gained from them new zest and energy. It was as his sister Una that she delighted in winning her way to high rank in her classes and in taking a respected place in the social circle of her college world. She would have employed her time and her advantages conscientiously in any case, but duty became a joy when somebody cared.

There were other letters which came in those days, though not so regularly. From abroad Flora wrote glowing descriptions of places and scenery, bright bits of travel with gentle moralizing and some sound and wise reflections interspersed. Unity read them with a peculiar smile, and often dropped them in her lap for a long puzzled reverie.

But as time passed she was able to enjoy them more for just what they were, without seeking to read between the lines or to find what never could be there. Her answers were slow and brief. She could not find much to say—much that she cared to say—in reply, and there were long lapses in the correspondence.

While the journeying lasted Flora seemed scarcely to notice this, but another year, when she was at home again and wrote to her cousin as of old about her numerous plans, she missed the accustomed ready sympathy and gently complained that Unity was allowing her studies to crowd everything else from her mind.

"Cultivating the mind is all right, dear, but be careful not to do it at the expense of heart and soul," she counseled. "I cannot bear to feel that you are losing interest in any of those things for which once you cared so much."

Flora had been giving an account of the mission schools and her own reorganized classes, and Unity smiled as she read the closing admonition. A little sadness, some

pity for Flora, for herself and for poor human nature generally, the smile expressed, but there was no longer any bitterness in it. She began to understand that the Flora who had been so earnest and devout was not necessarily a sham, nor the Flora who had been dazzled by Mr. Kinley's wealth and position consciously a recreant. Both were only parts of an imperfect and inconsistent whole, not a faultless pattern to be copied. This cousin had taught and helped her much in the days gone by, and gratitude and affection awoke again now that the bitterness of her disappointment had passed and she could judge more clearly. But she could not write on those topics to Flora quite in the old way; and, in truth, what Flora missed and wanted was not so much sympathy with and interest in her work as the old admiration for herself and her doings.

Letters from home were infrequent and not very communicative. Rhoda was not an adept at correspondence, and John declared that he would rather do a day's work ploughing than write a letter of friendship.

"In a letter of business one could say what had to be said and stop," but a letter that had to be studied up to give all the news and everything of that kind was entirely too much trouble for him. So the burden fell upon Rhoda, and she postponed it as long as possible and then wrote, "Your father and all of us are as well as usual," reported the condition of the weather with almanac-like brevity, added a few statistics concerning the pounds of butter she had made this week and the pounds of butter made last week—throwing in an item about a visit from Dely or the colds and tumbles of little Jack and Baby—and closing with the self-evident "No more at present."

These epistles were difficult to answer, as they suggested neither question nor comment; and Unity knew that any account of her studies would be far less interesting to Rhoda than were the rolls of butter to herself. The home-letters were chiefly valuable for what they did not contain, by their lack of startling intelligence intimating that everything was moving on in the accustomed way.

In her brief vacations at home, however, Unity thought her father had changed. His hair had grown grayer, but that added less to his appearance of age than did his bent figure and his slow, uncertain step.

"Why, no, he isn't sick; I don't see that he looks much older," said Rhoda, to whom she spoke of it. "It's more that his eyesight has failed than anything else. He has used his eyes over those books till it's no wonder. And he says himself that his spectacles are poor. No, he hasn't changed much, only you haven't seen him lately."

Dr. Dodge asked Unity a few questions about her classes and branches of study—the only ones that were asked at home—and she wondered, as she watched him turn and grope his way slowly up the stairs, if that dingy upper room and his work in it really occupied all his head and heart, or whether the old house had grown any lonelier to him as its inmates went out from it one by one. She wished she could know whether he had missed her or cared to have her at home.

The old gentleman manifested his re-

membrance of her presence in an unexpected manner that evening by suddenly turning to her when he had opened the Bible for family worship:

"Child, I wish you would read for me to-night. I can hardly make out the words by this dim lamp, and these glasses are wretchedly defective. They make poor glasses nowadays. I must try again and get stronger ones."

Rhoda's eyes opened wide at the remark, and she glanced curiously from one to the other as Unity took the book and with deepening color, but without hesitation, turned to the Gospels and read:

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Whether her father noticed the deviation from the ordinary reading, Unity did not know; he made no comment. She wrote to Warren of the change which she saw or fancied in her father.

But the reply so surprised and overwhelmed her—though it was but the answer to many prayers from One who has surely promised to answer—that for the

time it banished from her mind all thought of the communication which had called it forth.

"I often wonder," Warren wrote, "whether father did really cast off Reub so entirely and irrevocably as he would have it appear, or whether, after all, he does not mourn over him and want to hear from him. I sometimes fancy he does, and that it may have troubled him more than we think. I do not know that he has ever tried to learn anything about him—or how much he thinks about any of us, for that matter. But I can remember him as you cannot—years ago, before this study began, while mother lived; and he cared for his children then.

"The truth is, Una, Reub is here with me, and has been for three years; and he is doing well too. I never really lost sight of him, and when I learned—it is too long a story to tell just how—that he had been hurt, but was still with the circus company, I got away for a day or two, went after him and brought him back. It did not take much persuasion, for he was thoroughly disgusted with the sort of life he had been

leading. He stayed with me until he was well enough to work, and then we had not much trouble in finding a good place for him. He is in a printing-office here, likes the work, and they like him. Lately we have so arranged it that we can board at the same place, and we have as cozy a little room as need be.

"Maybe I ought to have told you all this before; but at first I did not think any one else cared for poor Reub as I did, and afterward, when he told me about your visiting him, he said, 'Don't tell any one about me until there is something respectable to tell.'

"I can scarcely explain how a wrong thing can be a good one, but I do believe Reub's going off in the way he did has really brought good—been overruled for good, I mean—both to him and to me. We had been growing more and more restless and discontented for a long time. Our home was not of the kind to hold or help a boy much, though I do not intend to blame any one by saying that. I began to spend my evenings away at first—not in the

best company, either—and then I took Reub with me; and of course we were naturally sinking to the level of our associates. I might have grown dissipated, worthless, even criminal, by slow, and to myself almost imperceptible, degrees; but Reub developed a recklessness that startled me. I had helped to lead him into it, but I soon lost all control of him and was no longer the leader. His course opened my eyes. I saw where he was going, and I was troubled and alarmed—all the more because I could not help feeling that I was in a great measure responsible for it. I myself began to turn about then, but I could not influence him; and you know how it ended. After he went away I determined to plan out some useful path for my own life, and to try to save it from ruin; but doubtless I should have made poor enough work of it but for the Help I did not seek. Do you remember that evening when I went with you and Flora to the meeting and would not go in? I only wandered around a block or two, and then back to the old church again. I could scarcely tell what impulse moved me. I said to

myself that I was curious to know what amusement you girls could find in such a place, but it was a deeper feeling than curiosity. I was back in a dark corner by the door through nearly all the meeting, but I brought away only one sentence—at least, it crowded out all the rest: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

"You see, Una, no saying that I did not believe any one could tell exactly when the judgment-day would come, and that I did not think any one really understood all the prophecies in Revelation, had any effect. This was nothing about times and figures that might be interpreted in different ways: it was just a plain, solemn, awful question. I knew that day would surely come, I could understand what losing my own soul must mean, and there could be only one answer to such a question of profit and loss. I tried to shake off the words, but they haunted me. They crossed every plan, they stood between me and every ambition, and at last they drove me to the Book I had not opened for years. Then the 'Light' flashed upon

me, growing clearer and brighter until it filled all my heart and life.

"After that I grew still more anxious about Reub. How could I ever read or use that wonderful name 'our Elder Brother' without thinking what sort of an elder brother I had been to poor Reub? I could not rest until I found him.

"And now I wish I knew how father feels about it. I have feared to write or to speak to him lest it should bring an answer far worse than even this silence. Maybe it is wiser still to wait."

Unity had no counsel to give upon that point. Her father had so positively forbidden all mention of Reub's name that she doubted how he would receive even this intelligence. But presently she forgot that question in the joy to herself of knowing that he was safe, useful and contented. It seemed almost too good to be true, and she read the letter again and again. She had so prayed for this! but when the blessing announced itself at her door, she was like the praying church at Jerusalem when Peter stood knocking without—slow to believe that

it was neither delusion nor vision, but the asked-for boon really granted.

In her happiness Unity longed to tell some one; but it was not Flora, with her many schemes for aiding and restoring the wandering, to whom she wrote—even though she knew Flora would be sincerely glad to hear—but to Lester. One odd little sentence in his reply she pondered without being quite sure that she followed its meaning:

"I have nearly reached the conclusion, Una, that when one is in danger of shipwreck it may not be wise to refuse a life-preserver simply because some other persons wear theirs awkwardly, or even because some are foolishly trusting to worthless imitations instead of securing the genuine article."

Very bright were those days to Unity. Warren and Reub came to visit her one Saturday, and they had a happy afternoon together in the quiet college town. She went back to her studies with the keen zest that only joy and hope can give. Every burden seemed lifting from her life, and she began to weave many pleasant plans for the

future. She had entered upon her last year at the university. The boys must surely come when she graduated. How glad she should be to have some one there who cared—some of her very own! Perhaps she could even persuade her father to come. It did not seem impossible, after what had already happened; and then—

But athwart all this happy planning dropped one of those unexpected barriers that we call accident or providence, according to our mood. In one of those cheery, busy days a boy came to the house with a bit of paper—a boy from the telegraph office bringing a thin brown envelope:

"Rhoda was thrown from the wagon this morning and badly hurt. Come at once."

There was scant leavetaking and hasty packing, and then Unity was whirling away through the evening shadows in the cars, that for once seemed to move too slowly, while her imagination strove to supply all the details which the brief message had not given.

CHAPTER XIV.

"A DAMSEL CAME TO HEARKEN NAMED RHODA."

IT was strange to see Rhoda lying pale and helpless; her very presence had always suggested energy and activity. But it became evident, as the first excitement of the occurrence wore away and the visits of the neighbors gradually grew less frequent, while those of the physician continued, that this was a state of things not soon to be changed, and one to which they must all become accustomed.

"Time," said the doctor, in answer to his patient's eager inquiries—"time is about all we can prescribe now, and patience."

It was but a repetition of the remark Dr. Dodge had made an hour before, and Rhoda questioned rather querulously:

"Well, but how much time? I'd like to know something about it. How long must I expect to lie here?"

"That is a difficult question to answer, Mrs. Dodge. I wouldn't expect anything about it," replied the doctor as calmly as if his suggestion were practicable. "No one can tell exactly. An injury to the spine, you know—"

"Doctor," interrupted Rhoda, with a sudden terrible fear blanching cheek and lips, "you don't mean—you can't think—this is anything that will last, that I shall be helpless always?"

"Well, no; I shouldn't like to say that." The doctor hesitated. "Nature possesses wonderful power of recuperation, and it is impossible to say just how much we may hope for in such cases; but they are tedious always. A severe spinal injury is a serious matter, and we must trust chiefly to time; but we may expect that you will soon suffer much less than at present, and— Yes, I think you should cherish hope of ultimately recovering a tolerable degree of strength and health."

But Rhoda had turned her face to the wall, so that it could not be seen, and answered nothing. This was a bit of work

that even she could not turn off in a hurry. Among all the busy planning and calculating which had been her boast, she had never calculated for anything like this.

Dr. Dodge explained to Unity more simply and explicitly than the other physician had done:

"She was hurrying, as usual, and hurried too fast for once—turned a corner carelessly. That was the way it happened. It's a wonder she wasn't killed. And now it will be months at least—probably a year—before she can walk a step. She will never be the strong woman she has been; that's the long and short of it."

Which summing up of the case sent Unity up to her room to unpack and put away her books with the knowledge that her school-days were done. A few tears fell over the task and all that it represented, but she clearly saw that it was necessary and right. Her place was here at home. Rhoda was laid aside; there were two little ones to be cared for, as well as the invalid. Then she had been shocked and surprised at the change visible in her father—a change of

which no one had written her, because it had come so gradually that they had scarcely noticed it. The upper room and its books no longer devoured all his time. He wandered slowly up and down stairs, in and out of the house, and spent long hours sitting in the sunshine on the old porch.

At first Unity thought that Rhoda's illness and all the excitement attendant upon it had drawn him from his accustomed pursuits for a time; but when she remarked upon it, Rhoda answered in the weak, half-fretful voice that was so unlike her brisk, determined tones:

"Oh, there's nothing wonderful about that; he hasn't stayed up there very much for the last two months. He can't see to pore over books the way he used to. I shouldn't suppose he could, when lately he has twice asked me to tell him what things were when I passed them to him at the table. Dear me! I wonder when I shall be able to look after things again?"

Unity looked out pityingly at the gray head bowed so silently in the sunlight, and dimly comprehended what it must be to

have the occupation of a lifetime taken away with nothing to fill the void.

"Father, you do not write and study now," she said, resolved to learn the exact truth from himself. "Is it because your eyes trouble you?"

Dr. Dodge turned his head a little at the sound of her voice:

"Yes; I can only just make my way around now: that's about all. Didn't anybody tell you? I thought John or Rhoda wrote to you now and then? Sometimes I can pick out half a page or so, if the print is very good; sometimes I can't do even that. I—I haven't been able to finish what I wanted to do. I had to give it up." The words ended in a sigh, and he left the porch and slowly walked down the lane to the gate.

Unity looked after him anxiously. She had never thought of her father as needing love or pity, but perhaps he had needed them all these years. It scarcely seemed that his life could appear to him a very happy or successful one as he looked back upon it. The evening before, when the

daily paper came, she had seen him pick it up, smooth it out carefully, hold it up to the light for a minute, and then with a sigh lay it down where John could find it when he came in. In these later years that one sheet had been nearly all the intercourse Dr. Dodge held with the great outer world and its doings.

This evening Unity managed to make an interval of leisure; and when the paper came, she asked cheerily,

"Shall I read it to you, father?"

The worn face—it had grown worn—brightened a little:

"Yes, child, if you will. I don't suppose the part you'll want to read will be what I care most about hearing, but read what you please."

But Unity was pleased to read what she thought would interest him, and, as she could not trust herself to judge what that might be, the journal was read pretty thoroughly.

Rhoda seldom cared for reading, but there chanced to be a few items in the local news that arrested her attention also and aroused

her to some animation. John saw it when he came in, and in his pleasure injudiciously commented upon it.

"Well, I shall have to lie here for nobody knows how long, and I must busy myself with something," replied Rhoda, with the flush fading from her cheek and the impatient tears coming to her eyes! "Oh dear! I am so tired of it all! and I expect the house will all go to wreck and ruin while I am not able to be about."

The house was neither wrecked nor ruined in those days, but Unity found her hands filled with a multiplicity of duties that called for skill, unselfishness, constant thought and labor. Rhoda was not the most considerate of invalids. She had in some way felt, without ever really defining the feeling, that illness was a pitiable weakness, to be tolerated with a sort of good-natured condescension in some cases, but one to which she was far superior. Her robust health was a part of the capability of which she had always been proud. It had never even occurred to her that the world—*her* world—could possibly get on without her; she did not believe it

now. Still, it became evident, as the days slipped into weeks, that the doctor had been correct in his opinion, and Rhoda was forced to accept—as we all must accept, whether bravely or with bitter repining—the inevitable. As the pain decreased she found herself helpless still, a prisoner between the narrow boundaries of bed and lounge.

"Father Dodge, isn't there anything I can do but just to lie here in the sitting-room all day and in my own room all night?" she asked, not very pleasantly, one day.

"I don't know as there is. Only," he added, with a half-envious sigh, "you have the use of your head and of your eyes."

That meant so much to him! but Rhoda answered truthfully enough, though petulantly:

"I've always used my head to plan what work I would do, and there's no good of doing that now; and my eyes seem to see more things that need doing than they see of anything else."

But her father's words suggested a thought to Unity, and the next day she brought to

the lounge some needles and an assortment of bright wools.

"Rhoda, do you suppose you could manage to show me the stitch of those little knit sacks for Baby?" she asked. "The evenings are beginning to grow cool, and he will soon need something to slip on over his dresses."

"Yes, I suppose so. I don't know when you will get it done, though. You never did knit very fast, and you haven't much time now," Rhoda answered, drearily. "Here! let me take the needles. I can start it more easily than I can show you." With the work fairly in her hands, she grew interested in it, and brightened visibly as her thoughts were drawn from herself. She knit a few rows, then dropped it to rest, but took it up again, and manifested no desire to relinquish it.

When Unity, to test the success of her experiment, proposed to take the work, she received the not very gracious but decided answer:

"What should I give it up to you for? There would be all the bother of your

learning; and if I can do the first of it, I can do the last of it, I suppose—a little at a time." So the work was left beside her, and little by little it grew, while, almost against her will, she became more cheerful by doing it.

Other kindred occupations followed, and the work-basket was established beside the lounge. Gradually—so gradually that the change was unperceived by herself—Rhoda's brain followed the example of her fingers, and, debarred from old employments, sought new ones. From tolerating the daily readings—for which Unity contrived to make time—Rhoda slowly became an understanding, and so a more interested, listener. After that first evening Dr. Dodge had regularly brought the paper to his daughter, and from the paper the readings had been steadily branching in many directions.

But all these things, with the household cares and the many demands of the two little ones, who were learning to run with their wants to "Aunt Una," heavily taxed Unity's strength and vitality. She was trying to do everything as Rhoda had done it,

to keep all the wheels running in exactly the old familiar grooves, and she had neither Rhoda's physical vigor nor her aptitude for the work.

So Unity's strength ebbed as the busy weeks passed. Overstrained nerves and muscles protested; the nights found her too tired to think, almost to rest, and the mornings still weary and unrefreshed. At last her common sense called a halt.

"I may as well look at this fairly," she said to herself one night. "I cannot keep on in this way much longer. Somebody must do all these things, but I do not believe I am that somebody. I have been trying to do just as Rhoda did, and because she did it; which isn't a very sensible reason, when one comes to look at it soberly. This time the pattern is too large for the cloth. A good strong woman could come in here and do with ease what is wearing me out, but of course we should have to pay her far more than we do little Jenny, and I suppose Rhoda would think that a ruinously extravagant proceeding. Well," giving herself a little mental shake, "I am not trying to

think Rhoda's thoughts now, but my own. Perhaps I can do something else that would more than compensate for the extra expense, and that would be far better than trying to do what I am not able to do. If I could find something better to do—something that I am fitted for, and that will not take me entirely away from home and the duties here that really need me—" She paused over that suggestion, and dropped into a deep study of its feasibility, with a silent prayer for wisdom and guidance. She was learning that every turn in the road needs its heavenly guide-post, and to recognize such places with the petition, "Whichever is thy way for me, lead me in it." The study was a long one, but her brow cleared somewhat at its close, and she said determinedly, "I will try, but it is not worth while to propose anything to any one until I have something to propose."

So Unity went about her work as usual the next day, only hurrying it all out of the way as rapidly as possible, and in the afternoon, somewhat to Rhoda's astonishment, started for the village. If she could obtain

a position as assistant in the school there, or, if that were impossible, could secure pupils for a small select school, either would answer her purpose, she thought. She had decided to call upon several of her acquaintances for information and advice.

The pleasant gray-haired pastor, who stood first on her list, was not at home, and Unity was sorely disappointed: she had counted much upon his interest. Besides, the project that had looked so promising the evening before wore a less hopeful aspect in broad daylight, when it must be put to a practical test. Despite her determination to be buoyant and persevering, her courage drooped as she slowly walked onward.

A lady passed her with a quick, firm step. Unity was so absorbed in her own thoughts that for a moment she noticed nothing more than that it was a lady. Then a subtle consciousness that there had been something familiar in face or figure caused her to look after the retreating form. As she did so the other also turned for a backward glance, and, meeting Unity's, paused, and with a sudden impulse retraced her steps.

"I wonder if you are not the very one I want?" she said, in an abrupt, eager way, more as if she were pondering the matter herself than speaking to another.

"I do not know, Miss Leonard," Unity replied, surprised, but laughing at the odd remark and its questioning tone.

Since that one miserable day in her childhood when the tall, haughty girl had attempted to revise her toilet, Unity had always remembered Margaret Leonard. They had met afterward at the village school, where Margaret had been among the older girls, a leader not only by virtue of her social position, but by her independence and self-poise. The intercourse between these two, therefore, had naturally been limited, and a year or two later Margaret had gone away to pursue her education elsewhere. Unity had occasionally seen her since—in the street or at some public assembly—but their acquaintance had been so slight that she was astonished not only at the peculiarity of the greeting, but at being addressed at all.

Miss Leonard herself laughed as she realized her own abruptness.

"I beg your pardon. I believe I have a fashion of plunging into the middle of a subject and gathering up the ends afterward," she said. "Have you any particular engagement? or can you walk with me for a few minutes until I explain?"

"I was only engaged in trying to find some one who might want me," replied Unity.

"Indeed?" Her companion's eyes turned steadily upon her to read her full meaning. "And I was trying to think of some one to help me—some one who could do it; and when I passed you in the street, it flashed upon me that you might be exactly the one." As she spoke she smiled from the height of her superior inches down into Unity's face. She had grown more gracious in temper, more considerate in tone, since the old days, but there was still the same earnestness of purpose and direct, straightforward manner. She was never uncertain as to what she wanted either from herself or from others, and she explained concisely: "I have been greatly interested in the Kindergarten work in the last year or two. I have been study-

ing it abroad, and I want to open a school here at home. There is room and need for it. Don't you think so? The mere mention of the thing has brought me offers of pupils sufficient to begin with. But I want some one to help me in the work itself—some one in earnest, who will not take it up just as a passing fancy and drop it again as soon as the novelty is worn off. I never do things in that way myself. I can find plenty of young ladies who would go into raptures over it as a new amusement and think it 'so sweet!' but I do not want them."

Unity's eyes sparkled and her face flushed with pleasure. She well knew that Miss Leonard could command both patronage and influence in any such undertaking.

"But I know nothing about the work practically," she observed, regretfully.

"That will not matter so much. I am sure you can learn it easily; you have natural aptitude for it, if you care to undertake it. Besides, I always liked you."

The last remark was added meditatively, honestly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to say, though Unity, glancing

swiftly into Margaret's face, fancied that she scarcely knew she had made it. A long walk and a long talk followed. The scheme was fully explained, discussed and satisfactorily matured before they parted, and the prospective partners in the enterprise far on their way to mutual acquaintanceship and cordial liking.

Unity went home with lightened heart, though one difficulty still remained—explaining the plan to her family and meeting the opposition she was sure would arise. She was not disappointed. Rhoda thought "school-teaching might be well enough, but who would look after the work and everything that must be done?" Some people could manage all that nights and mornings and Saturdays, but she did not suppose Unity could, as she seemed to think the work so hard when she had her whole time for it. As for hiring some experienced woman to come into the house, that would cost dreadfully and everything would be wasted. No woman would feel the same interest that one of the family did. When she—Rhoda—was about, she was always accustomed to doing

this and this and this herself; she would trust it to no one else.

"But you cannot be about now, Rhoda, and I cannot do it," said Unity, decidedly. "When you had charge of the house and work you managed it all in your own way, and now that it must all be in my hands it is only fair that I should have the same privilege."

"Yes; that is true enough," assented Dr. Dodge, lifting his head from its resting-place between his hands. He was beginning to notice and accept a great many things that his daughter said in these days. "However badly you or any of us may feel about it, Rhoda, the fact remains that you are laid aside, and must be for a good while to come. It is wise to face it and make the best of it. Everything falls to Unity's care now—household expenses as well as the rest—and those of us who can't help should not hinder. It is only fair that what she has to do she should be allowed to do in the way she thinks best."

"And I am sure I can do a good deal of it best by proxy," added Unity, thankful for the plain statement of the case. "I am

not strong enough to do all the hard work, but I can do something else by which I can earn more than sufficient to pay some one who is strong enough; which amounts to the same thing—or rather to a better thing, since it will leave me a surplus of money, strength and time which will be of advantage in other ways. I am trying to do my best, Rhoda, and that is all that I can do, though it may not be your best. We are not all alike. I suppose God did not mean that we should be, or he would have made us so."

Rhoda was silent. A year before, she would have contended that the real reason others could not do so much as she was because they fancied they could not or wanted an easy time. But now she had found a reason quite beyond her own will and control why she could no longer do these things herself. She reflected, also, that, as Unity would be away only three or four hours each day, she would still take the responsibility and oversight, besides having more time to spend in the room with her and with her father.

This last was becoming a more important item of daily comfort than Rhoda acknowl-

edged even to herself. Unity had studied much to find something fresh, entertaining and helpful, and had succeeded beyond her expectations with two auditors so unlike. But Dr. Dodge, as he depended more and more upon his daughter, was beginning to feel a new interest in whatever interested her. For Rhoda all interest in books was new—enforced at first, if such a thing can be, but growing more natural. She looked forward to the hours when Unity could be at leisure, and knew, without really questioning why, that they were the pleasantest of the day. Her study of this young sister-in-law, dropped in a great measure while Unity was away at school, began afresh now that they were together again, and with all the more intentness and avidity because in these weary days she could do little else but think and watch. She was listening to some voices in Unity's life, and pondering them more deeply than any of her readings. After all, there might be a strength superior to the capacity to "turn off work."

That evening Unity wrote a long letter to Cousin Lucretia Gill.

CHAPTER XV.

"BY A WAY THAT THEY KNEW NOT."

THE answer to that letter was a band-box and a bundle, a trunk and a box, and, most important of all, Lucretia herself—her veritable self; for she seemed scarcely to have changed with the years.

"Why didn't you let me know you were coming?" cried the delighted Unity. "I would have met you at the station."

"I knew I could get myself out here," said Lucretia, serenely, "and I thought the best way to send you an answer was to bring it myself."

"I was so afraid you wouldn't come!" laughed Unity, with the tears standing in her eyes.

"I told you if ever you needed me to let me know," replied Lucretia, calmly laying off bonnet and wraps in her old room. "Dear me! This is homelike. But you

don't look a bit more like the mite of a girl I left than—than you are like her; and I fancy that ain't much."

Lucretia's coming was a great relief to Unity. It secured at once both faithfulness and ability in the management of the household and restored again the old guardian of her childhood. Dr. Dodge and John welcomed her, and even Rhoda admitted that her coming was better than to have had a stranger—how much better she only learned slowly as the months passed by.

Lucretia slipped naturally into old ways, and as far as possible freed Unity from all care. She was secretly both fond and proud of Unity—a feeling that seemed to have grown during her absence—and delighted in calling her, to herself, "that girl I as good as brought up." But she at once adopted little Jack and the baby, declaring that she "should not know the old house if there were no children in it;" she could not get used to having "everybody grown up."

"You see, I didn't think I cared so much about this place when I was here—thought I was tired of it; but after I went away

nowhere else seemed homelike," she remarked to Unity one morning as she rinsed and shook out her dish-towels with the old vigorous snap. "I had it in my mind to come back and see you all before your letter came; and now, with Mrs. Dodge the way she is and you wanting to teach, we seem to sort of fit into one another's needs. I don't see why we shouldn't get along toler'ble comfortable, 'specially if everybody tries."

It seemed to Unity that everybody did try, and she, at least, was more than tolerably comfortable. There was still care for her father and for Rhoda, but many old anxieties had resolved themselves into comforts and old discords were hushed.

The Kindergarten flourished from the first. Margaret Leonard was not one to undertake such a project without due deliberation or without having thoroughly fitted herself for it, and she had, moreover, as has been said, both friends and influence; so from the first Unity had none of the solicitude attending a doubtful experiment. She liked the work and she liked Margaret—a mutual liking that, as they were brought into closer com-

panionship day by day, was fast ripening into sincere friendship.

Margaret often congratulated herself upon her selection.

"I should pride myself upon my intuitive perception—'the dip of my divining-rod'—if I did not feel sure that Providence instead of any keenness of my own brought us together," she said one day. "I believe I have a certain sort of fitness for this work, Una, but you have positive genius for it. You seem to know instinctively what is needed, and you are not bound to the beaten tracks; you can originate methods of your own."

"I am glad they are my own," laughed Unity. "I have been slow to learn to respect my own individuality. All my life I have wanted to be somebody else. I have envied and admired the rich ones, the sweet ones and the good ones, and have tried to be like them all in turn."

"Been trying all your life to wear some other person's 'bettermost cape' and to feel at home in borrowed finery, have you?" laughed Margaret, for the first time betraying her

remembrance of that luckless afternoon. "Do tell me if I did really ruin that precious horror beyond remedy?"

"No; a few extra bows restored it to its pristine ugliness. Dear old Lucretia!" Unity smiled at the memory, but with a seriousness lurking under the smile as she added: "Yes, that is just what I have always been doing, Margaret—trying to make myself beautiful or useful with capes that would not fit. One of the first things I ever learned was the statement in the catechism that God *made* me, but it has ever since taken me to learn that God made *me*."

"Well, I am glad he did, and that you are yourself, and nobody else, in spite of your trying," said Margaret.

> "'Dare to be right; dare to be true:
> You have a work that no other can do,'"

she sang, playfully, looking back over her shoulder as she walked away.

In Unity's own home there were many things that "no other could do."

Rhoda admitted it wonderingly.

"I'm sure it never used to seem so. I

wonder whether she is so changed? or am I? Or is everything different?" she mused one afternoon as she watched Lucretia vibrating between the tea-table and the door, waiting for Unity to enter, while Dr. Dodge, with a book in his hand, paced to and fro through the room, pausing each time he reached the window and listening rather than looking for his daughter's coming.—"Father," said Rhoda, with a sudden thought, "I might read that chapter for you without your waiting for her to come. My eyes are good enough, and I haven't much else to do."

"You? If you will!" exclaimed the doctor, turning suddenly toward her, his surprise rapidly changing to gratification. "It is something I have read more than once, but there are two or three statements in it that I tried to recall to-day, and I could not exactly remember them."

Unity found them still busy with it on her return, Rhoda ensconced among the pillows of her lounge, her father beside her, his head bent to catch every word.

Astonished but pleased, Unity marveled

what had brought about such an unlooked-for occupation, and could not refrain from questioning a little afterward:

"Did the reading tire you, Rhoda? I'm afraid you didn't like it."

"Well, I don't know any reason why I shouldn't now and then do what I don't like to do, as well as other people," replied Rhoda; and Unity received no further enlightenment as to the origin of the proceeding and its motive. But, whatever it was, it so satisfied Rhoda that she repeated her offer, until it became a common occurrence for her to read to her father-in-law.

"To be sure, I don't see much sense in a good deal of it, but I don't suppose he sees any more in my wools and tidies," she said, laughingly, one day. "We are neither of us good for much to anybody else, so we might as well humor each other."

But it would have been very unlike the old Rhoda to have said or thought such a thing. There was some change that had gone far deeper than the paler cheek, the more delicate hands and the softer eyes—something that was slowly transforming tone,

word and spirit; and, whatever she thought of the dryness and depth of the papers and books Dr. Dodge brought her, she was not tried by the subjects he once would have chosen. The mystical interpretations, the abstruse calculations, that had so absorbed him he seemed to have dropped—from necessity at first, undoubtedly, but later Unity fancied they had lost their attraction for him. When she read the Bible morning and evening, he never asked for the prophecies over which he had pored so long, but he listened to the Gospels almost as if they were to him a new story. Once, when he thought himself alone, she heard him repeat the words she had read:

"'Precious stones, wood, hay, stubble'—'the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.' Ah me! what rubbish we do build even on the true foundation!" he added, with a sigh.

Unity, who trusted that the Comforter was bringing solace for the darkness that had fallen over his life, and that his evening hours would be cheered by new and better hopes than any the day had known, vainly

watched to see his worn face brighten. It only grew graver and sadder day by day. He was very gentle, much quicker to notice the wishes and words of others than once he had been, but still saying little. The companionship of the children suited him. There was something pathetic in his patience with their countless demands, and he would sit on the porch in his arm-chair and rock these little ones to sleep, or wander about with them for hours when the weather was fine. But more and more frequently the gray head dropped into its resting-place between his hands, and his reveries grew longer.

"Now, I b'lieve," said Lucretia one bright autumn day, when her choicest cooking had failed to tempt his appetite, or even to win a smile of appreciation—"I verily b'lieve that man is just a-pinin' away over something that worries him. He says he ain't sick, but it stands to reason something is the matter with him; and somebody ought to find out what it is," concluded she, with a glance at Unity.

Unity greatly doubted her ability to learn anything further in the matter, and still

more her power to aid even could she learn. Nevertheless, she made the attempt.

"It is hard for you to give up all your own work and plans, isn't it, father?" she asked, joining him where he sat in the sunlight. "Were you busy with something you are very sorry to leave undone?"

"More sorry for work that is done than for any of the kind you mean that is left undone, child," he answered, slowly. "God will not let us pierce the mysteries of heaven by any Babel-towers we can build. What was that you read the other day? 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed to us and to our children—' Our children! I haven't given mine what belonged to them, child; I have been so busy trying to pry into his secrets that I have lost sight of himself."

"But he has not lost sight of you, father," the girl ventured to answer.

"Ay, I know it; I have learned that also." His head dropped wearily on his hands. "But, child, the more sure I grow of that, the more I see how unlike—" He lifted his head and suddenly turned his dim

eyes toward her. "If ever the Lord can forgive— Yet how shall I meet my boy's mother and tell her? My boy! I do not know where he is, body or soul."

"Safe and well," said Unity's glad voice. "Father, I know; I can tell you."

It was such a happy story to tell! and at last the old man understood it all and murmured brokenly:

"Now, of all God's goodness, can anything be greater than this—that he saves us from our own undoing?"

John and Rhoda learned the tidings before the evening was over, and sincerely and heartily entered into the rejoicing, with no stricture upon the past.

Lucretia looked after the old doctor that evening as he passed out of the room and remarked with an emphatic nod of her head:

"Well, I do b'lieve the coming of the Lord is nigher to this house, at least, than it was when the doctor was so sure about it."

As Thanksgiving drew near there was an unwonted stir in the old farmhouse. Warren and Reub were coming, and Lucretia had

earnest consultations with Mrs. John on the subject of cookery; for she and Lucretia were becoming good friends and coworkers. As Lucretia herself explained it, "Folks always do get nearer to one another when they get nearer to the Lord." That was, in truth, the summing up of all the changes which made that Thanksgiving day such a happy one.

Unity, thinking it all over that night, would willingly have changed places with no one.

"I'm glad to be here in my own place," she whispered—"myself, with my own work, my own dear ones, my own burdens and blessings which God has given me. How slow I have been to learn it—to live my own life and make the most and the best of it without trying to make it another's!" Her father's religion, from which she shrank; Rhoda's smartness, which she could not imitate; Flora's goodness, which was so imperfect at last,—all these, and many more, had bewildered and misled her. She had blundered among her many patterns.

"Christ alone is our Pattern," Unity said, softly.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

00024705080